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To J. L. Toole.

From his old friend

Joseph Hatton

A MODERN ULYSSES.

April 15/83.

Hatton wrote a great biography of Shakespeare

A MODERN ULYSSES.

BEING

THE LIFE, LOVES, ADVENTURES, AND STRANGE EXPERIENCES OF HORACE DURAND.

BY

JOSEPH HATTON,

AUTHOR OF "THREE RECRUITS," "TO DAY IN AMERICA," "CLYTIE," "THE QUEEN OF BOHEMIA," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DEDICATORY PREFACE.

TO

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF KUTUTU,

SUZERAIN OF THE BULONAGAN ISLANDS, &C.

SEP 24 53 MARSHALL

SIRE,

I have the honour to address you from England, the centre of civilisation and power.

The chief purpose of my letter is to introduce to your Majesty's notice the three accompanying volumes, which, among other things, give a faithful account of my experiences in the Bulonagan islands and the Eastern Seas.

The alleged Irishism of writing a letter and being the bearer of it oneself, in this instance, loses its point. There is as yet no

postal service between Europe and Kututu. You wield the sceptre of a paternal majesty outside those specific "resources of civilisation," allusion to which has so often supplied a "glittering generality" to the splendid eloquence of an illustrious English Premier, whose sympathies I hope to enlist in behalf of your "islands of the sun." It is, therefore, not at all strange that I should write to you a letter in the hope that I may myself deliver it, with the three volumes to which I venture to append it as a dedication, in grateful recognition of the services I have received at your hands, and as a tribute of admiration and respect.

The ministers of our great and glorious Queen, Victoria, have under consideration the equipment of an expedition, with a view to such a survey of Kututu and the Bulonagan islands as may lead to the establishment of commercial, and possibly even closer, relationship between your Government and that of "the old country," as you affectionately designated—

"This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of Majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise;
This fortress, built by Nature for herself,
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy brede of men, this little world;
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happy lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."

When next we meet I shall have the honour to explain to you how a number of persons, whose souls are in their ledgers, propose to tunnel a pathway under "this sceptered isle," which shall render abortive its defensive moat, and thus reduce "this seat of Mars" to the level of those unhappy countries of the Continent, which, not being blessed by Nature with a "silver sea" that serves as a protective wall, are continually in fear of, or suffering from, the piratical inroads of neighbouring kingdoms, against whom their artificial frontiers need the everlasting guardianship of mighty armies, the maintenance of which saps the industrial strength

and retards the progress and prosperity of both States and Empires.

I am disposed to believe that the government of "this fortress built by Nature for herself" will favourably entertain the proposal of which you did me the honour to make me the bearer, for the reason that at the present time there is some jealousy of the French, who are showing what is called a Chauvinistic spirit of enterprise, which conflicts with the policy of England, inasmuch as it is contended that we are the only people who have any right to extend their Imperial and Colonial possessions.

Whether this forecast of English action should in the end be justified or not, I am on the eve of setting out under very happy circumstances, in response to your Majesty's invitation, and with a view to a complete study of your administrative system, an exploration of your country, and the establishment of regular communication, by way of Manilla, between Hong Kong and Kututu. In this enterprise I am supported and en-

couraged by an excellent friend of mine, a British merchant long since settled at Manilla, and well known in the Eastern Seas. If your Majesty's labours had not been confined to a part of the world that is, in spite of our boasted British enterprise, literally unknown (and how can one wonder at this when Newfoundland, the oldest English colony, and the nearest to the home country, still remains unexplored?), you would have been familiar with his name. He is a traveller, trader, and scholar, and I shall hope to be present when he has the felicity to entertain your Majesty at his own house.

While referring to the drawbacks which Kututu suffers in being outside the pale of European or British civilisation, I am desirous to remind your Catholic Majesty that this isolated position also has its advantages. If Kututu has no gas, it has an unclouded sky, and a moon that meets with no eclipse from cloud or fog. Though its commerce be limited, it has no duns, no necessity for co-operative stores, no joint stock companies, no bills of

exchange; while its money is Nature's own produce, and its Royal Exchange a proper mart of barter. It is so long since you were in England that it is possible you may hardly appreciate, at their true value, the blessings of an island in which there are no paupers, no politics, no financial panics, no printing-presses, no judges fired with the Coleridgian ambition of addressing law-courts for fourteen days at a stretch, no sculptor's quarrels, no Parisian modistes (and I might say "immodests"), and no land-laws, Irish or English; although, in respect of this last-mentioned instance of blissful ignorance, I fear Kututu may find in Bulonagan her own Irish difficulty.

It has been wisely said, that government by a single individual would be the best form of rule, given talent and integrity, and the perpetuation thereof in the succession. Illustration of this is found and quoted in the only instance of absolutely perfect rule, that of the Deity, "which is sole and unrestricted." I know that your Majesty believes in this principle of a pure despotism, the

weakness of which lies in the impossibility of its perpetuation; for there must be good kings and bad kings, and those monarchs who claim to be most specially selected by the Lord himself are generally least worthy of the confidence of their subjects. Kututu is safe in your hands, but you lament the absence of any possible successor who will carry on your benign and benevolent government. Hence your desire to invite such European intervention as shall keep the country from relapsing into the barbarism that still afflicts the neighbouring islands of the Bulonagans. Forgive me if I question whether a taste for blood is much worse than an inordinate thirst for rum; you have considered the situation from all sides, and believe in the rule that leans its back against the Bank of England. So be it! I shall do my best to give effect to your opinions and desires.

I remember that in one of our conversations you deplored that custom, and the low state of Kututuan morals, should compel you

to own slaves. It was not then within my knowledge that George Washington himself, who founded the American Republic and could not tell a lie, lived and died a slave-owner. Let this fact reconcile you to your position. I do not remember that the Oriental fashion of the harem, which appears to obtain at Kututu, was a subject that you mentioned with regret. Possibly Biblical warrant for the practice had already commended it to your views of paternal government. At the same time I venture to remind your Majesty of a fundamental law of progress, which permits no systems civil or ecclesiastical to exist, without they move along "with the tide of general improvement." The authority to whom I am indebted for the phrasing of this sentiment (a very simple philosopher, one William Benton Clulow) also lays stress upon "the firmest supports of princes and statesmen being the general distribution of moderate wealth, and the multiplication of domestic comforts among the members of

the community," and he contends "that it is chiefly this circumstance which has hitherto kept together the heterogeneous materials composing the American population; as to the same cause may be attributed in no small degree the tranquillity that has so long prevailed in China, containing, according to the most authentic accounts, about three hundred and sixty millions of inhabitants." It is plain, therefore, that the same measure of material happiness may exist under even a Despotic Monarchy as under a Republic, provided something like a comparative equalisation of property, and other none the less important external advantages, are kept in view.

If your Majesty were posted up to date in the current literature of the time, I suspect I should have had to quote the modern philosophers Spencer, Arnold, Mallock, and others. I am thankful it is as it is; otherwise I should have had to read their books, instead of having merely skimmed them, with the result that I am more than ever content

with the smattering of their predecessors which I picked up at Breedon, a district of England that is duly mentioned in the following chapters. I fear I prefer Tacitus to Arnold, Voltaire to Spencer, Tom Payne to Mallock, Adam Smith to Mongredien, and the early works of George Eliot to the later essays of Thomas Carlyle; but I must confess to you that I am not an educated man in the academic sense of being educated. I may therefore be glorifying myself in an ignorance of which, under more favourable conditions, I should be ashamed.

I envy your Majesty the delight of making a first acquaintance with some of these authors; and I am vain enough to believe that you may experience some pleasure in the present work, which will be elevated in the general estimation of the public by the adornment it receives in being dedicated to royalty, and more especially by one who knows what it is to call a king his intimate friend. A learned American traveller long since discovered that emperors and kings,

when one is fortunate enough to see them at home, are very much like ordinary people. He found them so pleasant and natural that he never afterwards had any confidence in the "tinsel kings of the theatres." When they "swaggered round the stage" in jewelled crowns and splendid robes, he felt bound to observe that none of the monarchs with whom he was personally acquainted put on airs or "marched about in crowns and sceptres." I call to mind the natural majesty of your own demeanour when first I saw you. I remember your Majesty's pleasant familiarity at the Cannibal Court of the Kututus; and I see you now, through the mists of morning, dealing out certain unexhausted resources of civilisation upon the revolted islanders of your gentle suzerainty. On each occasion you proved to me that a king may have as generous a heart as an uncrowned hero, and that a liberal-minded man sustains no necessary disability, in his capacity for individual friendships, by becoming an emperor.

I wish the work I now invite your Majesty

to read were entirely worthy of your attention. It is full of anachronisms and it has many other short-comings. What they are exactly I do not at present know. All England will become acquainted with them, however, when certain critical searchers after error have reported thereon. Similarly, by virtue of sympathies which make the whole world kin, good things, which their author never dreamed of, will also be discovered; and if this little fleet of three have not to bear more weight of condemnation than such light craft are constructed to carry in the tempestuous seas of Public Opinion, then they shall haply sail into many peaceful ports, proclaiming to the world the hitherto unknown kingdom of Kututu, and adding a new name to the history of monarchs who are celebrated for their courage and magnanimity.

May it please your Majesty to permit me to subscribe myself,

Your Majesty's faithful and
humble servant,
HORACE DURAND.

London, 1883.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	"And Memory with her Dreams shall come."	3
II.	One of my earliest Adventures	19
III.	Over the Hills and Far Away	39
IV.	Funeral Chimes and Marriage Bells	59
V	My Uncle says I am a lucky Dog	76
VI	What might have been	103
VII.	Love and Marriage	116
VIII.	Colonel Ernstone's Secret	138
IX.	The Mystery of Thérèse Ernstone	147

BOOK II.

I.	Calypso's Island	159
II.	Outside the Grotto	178
III.	Inside the Grotto	194
IV.	The Shadows of coming Revelations	208
V.	Sketch of Judith Travers	226
VI.	Colonel Ernstone to the Rescue	232
VII.	A Daniel come to Judgment	240

A MODERN ULYSSES.

BOOK I.

There is no pleasure that I have experienced like a child's Midsummer holiday—the time, I mean, when two or three of us used to go away up the brook and take our dinners with us, and come home at night tired, happy, scratched beyond recognition, with a great nosegay, three little trout, and one shoe, the other having been used for a boat till it had gone down with all hands out of soundings. How poor our Derby days, our Greenwich dinners, our evening parties, where there are plenty of nice girls, after that! Depend upon it, a man never experiences such pleasure or grief after fourteen years as he does before, unless in some cases, in his first love-making, when the sensation is new to him.—KINGSLEY.

CHAPTER I.

"AND MEMORY TOO WITH HER DREAMS SHALL COME."

"Is it a true story?" asked the little fellow, looking up at the Frenchman, who had laid aside his violoncello and was fighting imaginary foes with his bow.

"True!" said the Frenchman, "every word of it."

"Carky Jones says 'Jack the Giant Killer' and 'Cinderella' are made up out of somebody's head."

"She is of the earth earthy," said the Frenchman, "and has not imaginations."

"I tow'd him they was made up, because he was for starting off hissen and

going on his ventures; he's so fanciful," said Carky Jones, a stolid Midland Counties domestic.

"I was only wondering what there is at the other end of the long road over the hills yonder," said the boy.

"There is always one long road over the hills of life," said the Frenchman, "which we wonder about, but it is best to wait till we get there."

"Oh," said the boy, with a puzzled expression of face, "are those the hills of life, yonder over the river and far away?"

"No, they are not so steep; we will cross over those littler Alps one day and see the grand Palace," said the Frenchman.

"Is the new story about the Palace?"

"What, the adventures of Ulysses? No, when you are old enough to read Fénélon you will find that when Ulysses lived there were no statues, no pictures, no painted ceilings, only Nature with her flowers and shells and vines and lovely caves, the one of Calypso for example."

"Like Robinson Crusoe's island?" asked the boy.

"Something of that kind," answered the Frenchman.

"Robinson Crusoe is true?" asked the boy, with a certain suggestion of hope and fear in the expression of his voice.

"Just as true as Ulysses."

A sigh of relief announced the satisfaction which the boy found in this statement.

"And now, Monsieur of Many Questions, shall I go on?"

"If you please, father," said the boy, who was lying upon a rug by the old-fashioned fireplace, his chin resting between his two hands, his black eyes fixed upon the story-teller.

It was a pretty domestic picture, this scene in the early days of Horace Durand, which was the name of the boy who believed in Robinson Crusoe and wondered what there might be beyond the white road, over the hills that shut out from the world the little town where he was born. Let me try and enable the reader to realise it.

An old-fashioned room, wainscoted in oak; a bay window, looking out upon garden, lawn, river, and hills; opposite the bay window an open fireplace, with a low settle or seat, shadowed by an abutting mantelshelf. Doors on both sides of the room. Near the window, a round table. Carky Jones, a ruddy stoutly-built servant, is laying a service of blue and white china upon the round table. Close by, sitting upon a high-backed chair, and with her feet upon a velvet hassock, is a pretty young woman of about three-and-twenty. She is netting with coloured wools. A fair young creature, with brown hair and blue eyes, she is somewhat gaily attired, and wears more jewelry than is in keeping with her quiet artistic surroundings.

By the fireplace sits a middle-aged gentleman, French in appearance and manner. A spare and somewhat ascetic figure, his features are sharp and pronounced; dark sunken eyes under strongly marked brows, a prominent nose with delicately

moulded nostrils, a mouth betokening more refinement than strength of character, a shaven face, iron-grey hair closely cropped. His coat of brown cloth, with bronzed buttons, is high in the collar, cut dress-fashion, and with tight sleeves. He wears a cream-coloured cravat pinned with an antique cameo brooch, and now and then he takes the smallest imaginable pinch of snuff from the smallest imaginable gold snuff-box. By his side is a music-stand, and near it lies a violoncello. In one hand he holds a closed book in a French vellum binding; and he is conducting, as it were, his conversation with his cello bow. On the floor, upon a thick but well-worn Indian rug, reclines a dark-haired boy of seven, in a marone velvet frock, with an antique lace frill falling around the throat, and giving additional prominence to the tangled dull black hair that partly fringes the boy's swarthy face and falls upon his shoulders; his legs are bare to the knee, except as regards the covering of a pair of short socks and buckled shoes.

In a recess behind the cello-player is a square piano, upon which are scattered a few sheets of music, several pencil designs for lace, some water-colour sketches, a newspaper, sundry books, and a handful of neglected laburnums, "Whitsun bosses" and lilacs, that betoken a want of love for flowers on the part of the pretty lady sitting by the window.

"At the stern of his solitary ship sat Ulysses," went on the cello-player, reading from his book, and only betraying his nationality by a slight accent, and the occasional addition of the plural number to nouns singular, "and he steered right artfully. He saw the stars which are called the Pleiade and the Bear, by some called the Wain, that moves about Orion; he saw the slow-setting sign, the Boötes, which some call the Waggoner; and for seventeen days he held his course. The next day the coast of Phœacia was in sight looking like a shield. Neptune saw him, and to revenge him, because Ulysses had blinded his brutal sire, Polyphemus, he

raised a mighty storm and wrecked his ship, drowning all but Ulysses, who was saved by swimming with a girdle round him that Ino, a sea-goddess, had sent for his protection. After many perils from blinding surf and rocks that resisted his landing, he was washed ashore at last on the banks of the river that flowed into the sea from the land of King Alcinous, whose daughter found him in his distress, and invited him to her father's palace."

"The one at the end of the white road, over the hills yonder?" asked the boy, in a low voice, as if unwilling to interrupt the story, but too anxious about what was on the other side of the hills to resist asking the question.

"No, another one more strange, but not so beautiful," was the answer.

"Thank you, father," said the boy, "go on, please."

"And no one knew him; but the king showed him great attention, not only because he was god-like in build and graciousness,

but also because in those days strangers were honoured, as if they might be angels in disguise, and beggars even were fed and clothed. That was in the time before this town of Scarsdale was, or anything civilised in Britain, where even now they have not yet learnt how to honour the strangers within their gates. But the courtiers falling to converse about Ulysses, and his brave companions who had fallen by the way, he was overcome at the memory of their sufferings. His tears betrayed him, and at last, out of gratitude for the kindness of the king, and his daughter the princess, he said, 'O King Alcinous, I will no longer keep you in ignorance of my name and quality: I am Ulysses, that unhappy man whom the heavens and angry gods have conspired to keep an exile on the seas, wandering in search of my home which still flies from me.' All the Court was seized with admiration to behold in their presence one of those heroes who fought at Troy, whose sublime story had been made known to them by songs and tales, which they

thought, as Carky Jones thinks about Jack and Cinderella, were made up out of somebody's head, as she says; but seeing the real Ulysses, who gave them proof of his power by flinging the quoit, and other feats of strength, they now knew that the story of Troy and the mighty horse of Helen and Achilles and the rest was true; so they were all very happy listening to the history of his adventures, and, in the end, they helped him home in their glorious ships, for these Phœacians were the English of the classic world, as far as commanding the ocean is concerned, and the Greeks were the French, my ancestors and yours."

"And my mother's?" asked the boy, glancing his black eyes towards the pretty woman who had let her netting fall upon her knee, and was apparently gazing at that road over the hills which the boy had so often referred to.

"Your mother is the sweet and gracious link that binds our ancestry of France to her people of England, and gives to you the

British heart that is good and true, and with the head that is cool associates a chivalric mind, a taste for art, a noble nature, and the instinct to be a gentleman, such as all the heroes were of whom the great Homer has written."

"Oh!" said the boy, puzzled more than he liked to say, lest his father should wander still further from the narrative in hand.

"And Ulysses was always encouraged in his efforts to overcome all things that kept him away from his home with the knowledge that his loving wife and his dear son, his Penelope and Telemachus, his Emily and his Horace, were waiting for him whom they loved so truly, as he them. He did not know how sore beset they were, these two who were all the world to him and he to them, enemies all around them, enemies in his very palace, conspiring against mother and son to afflict her with what is worse than death, and to kill his Horace, who stood fast in defence of the honour of his father. If I your father being away in foreign lands

had my good name assailed while my enemies assembled here to be cruel to your mother, you would fight for us, would you not?"

"Till I died!" exclaimed the boy, starting to his feet, flinging himself into his father's arms, and bursting into tears.

"Ah! my son: *Courage! Hélas*, this is not well. Do not cry. *Tout beau.* Emily, see, I have made him weep. What shall I do? Ah, come Horace, you are too tender hearted. Come, come! *Parbleu!* If you cry at this you will never be a man to fight the world. *Courage, mon cher! Courage!*"

The old man pressed the boy to his heart and looked at his wife with a smile half sad, half joyous; for it touched him nearly to have such interesting evidence of his son's sensibility to both love and courage as he saw in the result of his dramatic appeal to the little fellow's feelings.

Just as Mrs. Durand was getting up, for Monsieur beckoned to her with his head, intimating his desire that she should sooth the boy who was still sobbing in his arms, a

constant visitor at Oakfield House was announced, and entered on the words "Mr. Welby."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, in his hearty genial way, "What is the matter? What! Horace crying!"

"No, Sir," said the boy, struggling from his father's arms and brushing his tears away, "I am not crying."

"That's right," said Mr. Welby, patting the boy on the head with one hand, shaking hands with Mrs. Durand with the other, and smiling affably on her husband.

"Horace is a dear boy," said his father, "but sensitive. Never mind, Horace, a man is the braver in a good cause when his heart as also his hand is engaged."

"A capital sentiment, Max," said Mr. Welby.

"Will you take tea with us, Mr. Welby?" asked Mrs. Durand, speaking for the first time for an hour at least.

"Thank you, yes, I came for the purpose," said Welby, rubbing his hands blithely and showing his white teeth.

"Well done, that is good of you, Welby, *très bien*, you make yourself at home. That is right. I have been telling Horace the story of Ulysses, and for a moment putting myself in the place of the illustrious Greek; and making as if he was Telemachus and his mother Penelope, I say to him would you not fight for the honour of your father and to protect your mother, and he cry out 'till I die,' and then burst into tears! What do you think of that?"

For a moment Welby did not speak.

"Ridiculous," said Mrs. Durand, "you fill the boy's head with nonsense, Maximilian; he will be a man before he is a boy."

"It is very good nonsense, my dear Emily, and will not hurt him either as man or boy," said Monsieur.

"No, that's true," said Mr. Welby, "quite true. I read the Iliad and the Odyssey, through and through, when I was a lad, and they never hurt me, not even the song the old fellow sang before Ulysses at—let me see—where was it? At King Alcinous'

place of course. Oh no, my dear Mrs. Durand, it is best to let boys know everything."

"But Horace is only an infant yet, one of Dame Skinner's youngest pupils," said Mrs. Durand.

"I don't like Dame Skinner," said the boy, "she whips children."

"Only naughty ones," said the mother, taking the boy on her knee and smoothing his collar and pulling up his socks.

"She shall nevaire whip you, Horace, only once, however," said Monsieur, "I would whip her pretty much and very quick."

"Whip a woman, Max! No, you would not do that," said Welby, taking a seat at the round table in the window.

"Then let her not whip Horace, that is all," said Maximilian Durand, my father as you must have guessed already; for that black-haired child in the velvet frock is your humble servant the author of this history, upon the threshold of which you and he are contemplating this little group toying

with Fate on the border-land of a troubled future.

The twilight gathers in restful hues of grey, as the people who open this story of real life sit around the table in the pleasant bay window of Oakfield House, so far away and yet so near in time and in reality that I live again in that youth of the velvet frock.

Mr. Jonas Welby was the junior partner of the firm that owned the then famous Scarsdale lace factory. My father was the designer of their patterns, and the inventor of several of their processes of manufacture. How he came to be in England and the husband of the belle of Scarsdale, and how I came at length to hate Jonas Welby, will be made amply manifest as the scenes shift and the play goes on.

Meanwhile let us keep in our mind this first picture of love and friendship, this happy home with its artistic surroundings; and while fate changes the scene and puts on the next you shall beguile the time with the music of that violoncello which my father takes up

by the desire of his friend, my mother following the tender melody of a Brittany ballad with an accompaniment upon the little square piano where the lilac and laburnums faint and die for lack of water. I see myself sitting in the window listening to the sweet familiar strain and watching the twilight melt away beneath the rising moon.

CHAPTER II.

ONE OF MY EARLIEST ADVENTURES.

We all of us remember, with the liveliest particularity, incidents that belong to the earliest days of our lives.

Our first morning at school, our first jacket, the first fish that rewarded our angle, our earliest joys and sorrows; they will compete with recollections that belong to far more serious days, and hold their own against memories of battle, murder, and sudden death. That strangely opportune incident of pledging myself to defend my father's good name, just as the shadow of Jonas Welby must have been falling on our doorway, how vividly it comes back to me now!

But we will dismiss that memory at present to recall my first adventure, since it is not uninteresting in itself and has been regarded as indicative of qualities that have pushed me into strange and sometimes untoward situations.

You will have gathered that my infantine instinct prompted in me a dislike to Dame Skinner, at whose educational establishment, not more than a stone's-throw from Oakfield House, I had just graduated in words of four syllables when the following trouble occurred. Under the shadow of tragic events I still recall the excitement of the end of my first month under the Skinner *régime* as if it were yesterday.

"He called me a guy, did he?" exclaimed Mrs. Skinner, removing her spectacles and taking up a cane, which she flung from her desk to the end of the school-room.

"Yes, marm!" shouted six small boys all at once; "an old guy, marm!"

"Fetch it, Horace Durand, fetch it!" commanded the injured lady.

It was the custom of Mrs. Skinner in extreme cases of insubordination to assert her authority and enforce discipline to compel rebellious pupils to carry the cane with which she punished them.

A black-headed, sturdy little fellow, in a velvet frock and lace collar, I can see my defiant little self pick up that terrible instrument of torture, which was Mrs. Skinner's symbol of power, the sceptre of her despotic authority, and carry it to madame. I can hear the buzz of fear and expectation which notified the extreme interest of the school in the fate that awaited me. I can see the laburnum blossoms, like a golden framework fringing the open window, and the distant hills looking like clouds far away. I can see the butterfly that poised above one of the yellow blossoms, and I am conscious, even now, of the perfume that came in through the open window, from an unseen bank of gilliflowers in the little garden that bordered the pathway to the portals of the school.

"Well, Sir!" said Mrs. Skinner, taking her sceptre, and switching it above her head and making the pliant thing fairly whistle, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"If you please, marm, Tommy Barnes said didn't I think you an old guy, and I said yes, marm."

"I don't believe it," she answered promptly, "Tommy Barnes is an honest English boy, and will tell me the truth; did you say what he says, Tommy Barnes?"

"No, marm," answered the young ruffian in question.

"I believe you," said Mrs. Skinner, "but let this be a warning to you."

Then, turning again to me, she said, "And do you think me an old guy, Master Durand, do you?"

"I am very sorry I said so," I answered, "but I don't like your cap, and Carky Jones does not."

"Oh, indeed," said the old lady, who must have been sorely hurt at this artless confession, for, above all things, she was

particularly proud of her caps. They were wonders of net, and starch, and ribbons.

"Carky Jones thinks it is too gay for an old dame!"

"Does she? Very well then we will see if this cane is too gay for a half-bred little savage, who is neither French nor English. Come here, you impudent young reprobate!"

With that she caught me by the shoulders and beat me. At first I was resolved not to cry, but the dear vain old woman made me howl before she had avenged her lace and ribbons.

Then she compelled me to stand behind her chair. What hurt me more than her cane was her scoffing reference to my origin and parentage. The boys of Scarsdale all called me "Frenchy" except those who called me "gipsy." I was neither the one nor the other; but my father was of French descent, and spoke with a slight accent, and my mother dressed me somewhat fantastically, compared with the generally cheap and

slovenly fashion of the uncultivated little Midland town in which I was born.

During the French war my father's grandfather was a prisoner on his parole at Scarsdale, and, on his release, had married an English wife, and gone home to Normandy. My father, when a child, had heard his grandfather talk of England, and particularly of Scarsdale. Coming here to see the Midlands during a holiday tour in England, he visited the lace factory, then just commencing work. Speaking the English language, which his grandfather had carried home with him, he disclosed, in his conversation with one of the chiefs of the firm, a certain special knowledge of lace-making which would be invaluable at Scarsdale. They made my father a very handsome offer of employment. He resisted it at first. He was a man of some means, and a bachelor; money was therefore no particular attraction to him. It was summer time, and Scarsdale looked its best. The senior partner of the Scarsdale lace factory invited my father to

an evening party. He met my mother there, and he never returned any more to Normandy.

I have heard my mother tell the story; how the young men sneered at the marriage, because my father was nearly old enough to be her father; and how the girls considered they were revenged upon her, for that previously she had been the acknowledged belle of Scarsdale. People used to remark that I was not like my mother. "A chip of the old block," Welby would say, patting my head, and I now remember that he would slightly emphasise the adjective whenever he said this in my mother's presence and my father was not there.

It is a singular fact that the stolid youth of Scarsdale seemed to disapprove of this likeness to my father. They referred to it in uncomplimentary term. "Frenchy" and "frog-eater" were ever on their lips. Some of them called me Mounseer. When I was old enough to defend myself, some of them had reason to regret their taunts, Tommy Barnes to wit:

indeed, as this chapter will show, he came in for a very early taste of my budding resentments.

To-day sitting down to write the story of my life, I can hardly realise the fact that the sobbing urchin standing behind Mrs. Skinner's high-backed chair is myself. And yet I recall, with as lively a recollection as if it were but yesterday, the sudden shout of the same six traitors who had unjustly condemned me to the torture of the Skinner rod, "He's shaking his fist at you, marm!" I suppose this was true, though I do not remember having done it. Possibly I did, for as the smart of the stick began to decline the smart of my indignation began to increase.

"He's making faces too, marm," cried Tommy Barnes.

"You good-for-nothing!" exclaimed Mrs. Skinner, "you are a disgrace to the school! You shall undergo the block punishment and we will see what that will do for you. If that does not succeed in

casting forth the French spirit of evil that possesses you, the rats and mice shall have a chance of bringing you to your senses."

The block punishment was not peculiar to Mrs. Skinner's establishment; it was common in most of the dames' schools of my youth. ' In later years when I was interested in the management of a certain public journal I commissioned a clever writer to go about the country and find out if "dames' schools" existed in these days of my manhood, and if so to expose the cruelties practised by the Skinners thereof, the canings, the ear-pullings, the hammering of heads with thimbles, the pinchings, the dark-hole punishments, and other atrocities inflicted on the rising generation when I was a boy in Midlandshire. The block torture was a very mild business compared with the horrors that lay beyond the committal to confinement in Mrs. Skinner's cellar, where it was believed by Mrs. Skinner's pupils, and vouched for by her eldest and weakest-kneed scholar, that once upon a time a very

wicked boy was eaten alive by the rats and mice which were always gathered together in the dark waiting for another similar meal.

Circe's description of the insatiate Scylla was not more terrible, in the imagination of Ulysses, than the horrors of the darkest corner of Mrs. Skinner's cellar were to me. The block punishment, however, was nothing if you practised for it, as some of the Skinner pupils did. The result of my first experience of it led to a greater isolation of the criminal than had hitherto been deemed necessary. You had to stand upon a form in the middle of the school, and hold up, in each hand, a block of wood, your arms being extended to their fullest stretch above your head. I was placed between Tommy Barnes and Sarah Smith, who were sitting learning their lessons. I cried a little when my arms began to ache, and, glancing down in search of a sympathetic face, Tommy Barnes looked up and grinned at me. His cruel mouth had not completed its scoffing distortion before the block of wood fell from my right hand

crash upon his face. The yell which he made was almost eclipsed by the shout of laughter which announced my fiendish or childish delight at his just suffering. But when I saw the blood streaming from his long thin nose I was afraid. The school-room door was a little way open, to let in the quiet summer breeze that was stirring the flowers and wafting their perfumes into the adjacent street. I leaped from the form, dropping the other block upon Sarah Smith's toes, and made for the open air. On the very threshold of freedom Mrs. Skinner's servant caught me in her bony grip, and pushed me back upon the scene of my murderous outrage.

Dispatching my captor for a bowl of hot water in which to bathe Tommy Barnes's mutilated face, Mrs. Skinner took me by the shoulders and led me forth to the dungeon.

"Wicked murderous boys who will otherwise come to the gallows had better be eaten up in dark cellars," she said.

The school was hushed as I passed out through the private door leading into Mrs. Skinner's house. Even Tommy Barnes ceased his howling as I went forth to execution.

Since those days I have seen perils by land and water, abroad and at home, but fear and courage have never fought in my mind a harder contest than that which agitated me at this moment. If Providence had not so ordained it that childhood should have the special faculty of quickly forgetting its troubles, in the joy of its simple pleasures, boys and girls would become candidates for lunatic asylums, or die of broken hearts.

A philosophic writer discoursing of childhood has touched this by no means original idea with an apt illustration. "A child," he says, "is purely happy because he knows no evil, nor hath made means by sin to be acquainted with misery. He arrives not at the mischief of being wise, nor endures evils to come by foreseeing them. He kisses and loves all, and, when the smart of the rod is

past, smiles on his beater." Does he? Sometimes, perhaps. It depends, of course, who the beater is, and whether the punishment is just, for childhood has a keen sense of wrong. *I* never smiled on Mrs. Skinner again, nor would I have done so, on any consideration, unless I had had the gift of smiling and killing while I smiled. As she pushed me before her to the dungeon I noticed that there was a long red bruise upon my arm, one of several which the strokes of the cane had made upon my tender flesh.

I remember the agonising fear that fell upon me as I was hustled along a passage, pushed into a dark place, and a door was shut and locked upon me. I shouted and screamed and kicked, imagining all kinds of horrors, and no doubt hardening Mrs. Skinner's heart by my cries. Presently, as no one came to my rescue and no rats attacked my naked legs, I summoned up sufficient courage to look around. I discovered that I was in a pantry that gave upon the cellar stairs. The pantry was quite a large one,

dimly lighted by a grating. This was a comforting discovery. As my eyes grew more and more accustomed to the darkness, and the importance of the light that struggled in through the grating seemed to increase, I observed that almost within reach, on one of the shelves, there were some cheese-cakes and part of an open tart. It occurred to me to wonder why the rats and mice had not carried these dainties off to their holes and dens in the cellar below. I dried my eyes and peered into other corners of my prison. There was meat on another of the pantry shelves, and on the floor a large earthenware pan, full of cups and saucers and plates, which the cruel bony servant who had intercepted my retreat, and thus caused my incarceration, no doubt ought to have washed and put away after breakfast, instead of huddling them into the pantry out of Mrs. Skinner's sight. Carky Jones was right, the Skinner servant was as idle as she was ugly: that was one of the discoveries I had completed in my dungeon.

It seemed as if an hour had elapsed during my exploration of the pantry. The rats not putting in an appearance I feared them no longer; but presently I heard the children leave school for dinner, and the thought of it made me hungry. I kicked at the door. Nobody responded to my noisy demand to be let out. It dawned upon me that I was probably locked up for the day, perhaps for the night also. Under these circumstances I thought it justifiable to eat a cheese-cake. Even light food of that kind would, at all events, check sheer starvation. Carky Jones had told me a story of an old woman who, being locked up for a witch, was starved to death. I was determined that I would not share a similar fate so long as dame Skinner's cheese-cakes lasted. I felt sure that neither my father nor mother would approve of my fainting and dying in the midst of plenty. Dame Skinner's cheese-cakes were very good, however bad she might be in my infantile imagination. I ate another and another. Then I took a respite. It

occurred to me that it would not be advisable to consume all the provisions at once. It would be time enough to devour the last of the tarts and begin upon the more solid food so soon as I experienced the first pangs of starvation.

After a little while longer I began to think of home, and my mother, and Carky Jones, my attendant from the first days I can remember and my mother's most devoted servant. They would be alarmed if I did not soon return. My father would be very anxious about me, I felt sure, the dear kind gentleman that he was. I therefore thought how I might escape. There was a cellar window below, but the idea of penetrating that awful abyss on the way to the window appalled me. Ulysses and the Cyclops occurred to me. After all Mrs. Skinner's cellar was paradise compared with the cave of the one-eyed giant. Ulysses escaped by strategy, so also would I. Happy thought! Supposing I dragged that pan of unwashed crockery to the top of the cellar stairs, and

then pushed it down? That would alarm Mrs. Skinner and her servant. They would fly to the cellar-head to learn the meaning of the terrible noise. In the confusion I could dash out, make for the street, and run home.

My heart beat wildly with the excitement of this idea. I suddenly found my imprisonment intolerable. The sound of the factory bell came faint and slow in at the cellar grating. I could hear above it the sound of the river falling over the weir. It maddened me this music of freedom. Taking a deep breath I seized the pan of crockery and dragged it toward the cellar steps. At length it faltered on the brink.

Before committing myself to the completion of my fell design I kicked at the door and howled out a wild appeal for forgiveness and release. No reply. The factory bell and the weir went on humming pleasantly in the distance, and I smelt pork chops. Mrs. Skinner was engaged at her mid-day meal. Pork chops was her favourite dish. I could

see her in my heated imagination, her gay cap nodding over the succulent meat, while her domestic-in-chief poured out the nut-brown ale.

Human nature could endure no more. Bang, crash, rattle, smash, bump, thump, swish, scrunge, whack! This is something like the impression the noise of the descending pan and its contents has left in my memory as they reached the bottom of the cellar stairs. The door opened almost on the instant as I expected. I darted forth between Mrs. Skinner and her lieutenant-in-petticoats, through the kitchen, out at the back door, down the passage that led to the street, where I met Tommy Barnes returning to school surfeited with pudding and sticky with sweets. He tried to seize me. I pushed him into the gutter and fled.

It was my father who received me into his arms a few minutes afterwards, and when Mrs. Skinner called to demand the instant restoration of her pupil or his prompt punishment at home, my father in his best decla-

matory manner said, "Madame, I will not consent to what you propose. My son is not a dog to be whipped, nor a barbarian to be imprisoned; neither, Madame, does your mistaken conclusions in regard to the discipline of the little ones meet with my approval. You should better be employed to govern savages. Adieu, Madame Skinnaire!"

With that my father withdrew into the parlour, where he bade me tell all the story over again, and vowed I should be a great man some day, worthy of the *esprit* of France and the honesty of my mother's countrymen.

Whatever my lot was destined to be, the dear old gentleman who first inspired me with a love of travel did not live to guide or review it. How I suddenly fell within the governmental dominion of Mr. Jonas Welby, and how unexpected succour came to me in the darkest hour of my boyhood, will form the subject of a few following chapters. It is not my intention to dwell upon these childish experiences. They may be considered pretty well at an end with the incidents of this

chapter. The advent of Connie Gardner, the pretty waif and stray of Scarsdale, grandchild of "Laudnum Nanny," is the "coming event" for which I claim the reader's continued attention. Connie flitted across my path in the Scarsdale meadows, a thing of beauty and of joy, to leave behind her a shadowy memory, which Fate revived in after-years with a cruel inspiration of love and sorrow.

CHAPER III.

"OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY."

In my mother's estimation I rapidly justified her opinion that my father filled my head with nonsense.

At the factory, where my father spent so much time, there was among the "hands," as they were called, an old gruesome-looking woman who was known as "Laudnum Nanny." The nick-name was a tribute to Mrs. Lingard's capacity for imbibing opium in its more common English form of laudnum. When I was a boy this drug was largely consumed at Scarsdale, more particularly by old men and women. It often served them instead of food. They preferred it to rum

or brandy. Nanny Lingard must have spent more money upon it than would have supplied her with regular and wholesome meals of food. She was a withered-looking hag. Her face was as wrinkled as a nutmeg and of a similar colour. Her eyes were very bright. She was sometimes very agreeable and sometimes very savage. Her hair was as white as the cotton that clung about her stiff bombazine gown. She carried a crutch-stick, though she was as nimble a-foot as the youngest girl in the factory; and the youngest was a child, her granddaughter.

Connie Gardner was this child. She was too young to do anything like labour in the factory; but her grandmother took her there on two or three days a week to help her, and on the other two or three days she went to school. Connie was my senior by seven years She told me so one day in a long conversation we had about our schools and schoolmistresses. There was a little stream of smoking water that ran into the river by the factory. I was fishing there one day for

minnows and other small fish that congregated about the luke-warm water which marked its radius with a white fleecy mist, when Connie stopped to watch me. Young or old, how one always pauses to consider and ruminate over an angler! In the background of one of my friend George Boughton's illustrations of Holland, I remember that quite a community have stopped to ponder over the sport of a little Dutch fellow who is dangling his legs over a lock, and contemplating a very ponderous "float." A man in a cart has pulled up to look at the boy; a couple of sailors have turned their quids and their attention at the same time to the young fisherman; a nurse has sat down on the canal bank with her charge; and the crowd has gradually grown into an interested if not an anxious audience.

The people who passed over the bridge that led to the Scarsdale factory were too busy as a rule to hang about watching my gentle attacks on the minnows and gudgeon of the North Midland River. Even the boys

had only time to pick up a stone and try to disturb my prospects. But one summer day Connie Gardner without a word came and sat down by my side. I had often watched her with wonder, if not with admiration. There was something of pity in my wonder, for it was currently reported that Laudnum Nanny was in the habit of beating her granddaughter. It was also said that Nanny was gifted with powers of witchcraft which she did not exercise only out of her fear of the constable and the justices. The very house in which the old woman and her grandchild lived was strange enough to encourage the belief in the uncanny relations that Laudnum Nanny held with the outside world of Scarsdale. It was a tenement that looked as if it had been packed into the corner of an old street at its juncture with another old street, like a wedge to hold the adjoining houses together. It had only one window and one door, and the latter was approached by a long row of stone stairs. Nothing looked more grim in Scarsdale than to see the old

woman sitting at the top of these steps taking the air on summer nights after the day's work was done, a candle burning within the neatly-kept room, and Connie a shadowy figure poring over a book by its dim and somewhat mysterious light.

She was singularly beautiful this waif and stray of the town where I was born. Great liquid eyes of a blueish-grey; long light hair tied up in a couple of plaits that hung upon her shoulders; a dreamy expression in her eyes always; and a certain sort of sadness about her firm mouth that both attracted and repelled. You felt sorry for her without caring to say so; you felt that if she was only a child of the gutter the fact was an accident. I think I had a secret sympathy for her because we were both martyrs to circumstances. I was persecuted by the youths of Scarsdale because my father was of French extraction and showed it. She was illused because she was an orphan and had to be brought up by a laudanum-drinking grandmother.

I can see the little pair of sufferers now sitting by the Scarsdale river, the mist of the factory steam lingering about the bosom of the river in strange shapes.

"Are you watching the fish or the steam?" she asks, in a voice more of command than inquiry.

"The fish," I reply.

"Oh," she says.

"I don't see anything in the steam," I remark, my eyes still fixed upon the float.

"It is like fairies dancing," she says, equally intent upon the mist rising from the hot water as it pours from the engine-house into the river.

"Is it?" I answer, looking up, "did you ever see fairies dancing?"

"No, but grandmother has and devils too."

"Devils!" I exclaim.

"Demons," she answers, "it is the same thing."

"Where?"

"In the meadows."

"When?"

"At night when we are all abed."

"Are you not afraid of your grandmother?"

"Sometimes."

"When?"

"When she is angry."

"Oh!"

This last ejaculation proclaimed a bite of more than ordinary severity, and I landed what we called a bull-head or devil's-thumb.

"The horrible thing!" I exclaimed, "it's one of those fish with the name of the demons. What shall I do?"

"Take it off the hook and kill it," she replied.

"I would not touch it for the world," I said.

"I will," she answers, and takes it off the hook.

"Kill it!" I exclaimed.

"No, fling it back into the river; it can't help being a bull-head, or whatever it is, any more than you can help being little Frenchy, or I Laudnum Nanny's brat."

She flung it back into the stream. It made a little whirlpool as it fell out of sight.

"Look at the steam, how it dances round like water fairies in a ring," she exclaimed.

"I'll fairies in a ring you!" said a harsh grating voice that reminded me of the saw-grinders who worked now and then outside the carpenter's shop at Scarsdale, "wasting your time! I'll teach you to keep me waiting when I've sent you on a particular errand."

A stroke across Connie's shoulders, with a stick, announced to her and to me that sentence and punishment were almost simultaneous in their action.

"You horrid old woman!" I shouted, "how dare you!"

"Dare! you little savage, I'll give it to you if you call me names."

I picked up the can prepared for carrying home my fish, and threatened her in dumb show.

The stick fell smartly on my shoulders as it had on Connie's, and the next moment

the can, water and all, struck the cruel hag full in the face, and I fled for dear life.

When Dame Skinner heard of this brutal assault by Durand's wicked urchin, she called a solemn "silence" in her school, and told her trembling classes of the awful crime I had committed. My mother, too, I am bound to say, was greatly shocked. She saw in my desperate conduct an unnatural wilfulness. "You will come to a bad end," she said, "if you do not control your passionate nature."

It was no defence in my poor mother's eyes that I had been a witness of Laudnum Nanny's cruelty to her granddaughter, nor was it justifiable that I should be very nearly committing a murder simply because an old woman had struck me with her cane. It appeared that I had inflicted a slight wound on the old woman's cheek, which Mr Welby said was hardly in keeping with the character for chivalry of the country to which I belonged. Mr. Welby had no right to refer to France as my country, but he did so

continually in my father's absence. In this way I knew in later years that he helped to cut me off from the affection of my mother. She, poor soul, in her vanity and pride, no doubt suffered as I did from local prejudice. Her family and friends always blamed her for marrying my father, because he was not only much older than herself, but for the reason that he was the son of a Frenchman. Scarsdale gradually made this a sort of social grievance against both my father and my mother, and Mr. Welby encouraged it for his own ends. My father's very accomplishments were made a cause of derision. It was unmanly to play the violoncello; it was finikin to wear a high collar and dress coat and have frills to your shirt-front; it was idle to sit for hours scraping at a fiddle.

Ah, me! how well I remember with what silent rapture I would sit and listen to my father as he poured his very soul into his instrument. He evidently set his thoughts to music I was not sufficiently expert in those days to know what works he most often

played. I think he sat or dreamed of his boyhood and made accompaniments to his recollections of France. Sometimes his music would set me thinking of Ulysses and his many adventures, and of his son left at home to the mercy of his enemies. Now and then I seemed to see the face of Connie Gardner looking at me through a musical fancy, and just as suddenly her cruel grandmother would dispel the vision with a stick.

All this is so much like a dream to-day that I find myself unable to set it down, except in this disjointed and unsystematic fashion. Connie's personality somehow is mixed up in my memory with everything that comes back to me, belonging to those strange days of my childhood. She appears to me with the imaginary sounds of the music of my early home, and I see her face, not only in the placid river that still runs through the Scarsdale country, but it takes shape in my memory of the flashing wheels and shafts of the factory. And yet in later years we

met, and I no longer knew her. The tender, though defiant eyes, that had a fascination for me when I was a boy in checked hose and buckled shoes, held me once more when I was a man, only the Scarsdale waif and stray remained locked away in the storehouse of my memory. It has a companion reminiscence in these later days that is also drifting away into the half-forgotten region of life's regrets and dreams.

The last time that I saw Constance Gardner (until she was a woman, in whom I failed to identify the girl of my boyish dreams) was under painful, yet romantic, circumstances. I recall the incident now with all its surroundings and attendant details, though it presents itself to my mind more like an episode of another person's life than as having anything in common with my own.

It is summer, bright genial summer. I do not think there have ever been such summers in England as there were in the Valley of Scarsdale when I was a boy. But let me not pause to cast reflections upon the climate

and other disagreeable characteristics of these modern days. It is summer, I say, in that sylvan country of my youth. A lonely child by force of circumstances, not because my disposition is morose, I have been wandering towards the summit of those hills that always seemed further and further away the longer I walked towards them, although there were times when they almost mirrored their loftiest peaks in the river that flowed under my bedroom window.

I am retiring homewards late in the afternoon, walking along a dusty highway, my hands full of wild roses. Around a bend of the road comes a yellow house on wheels drawn by two horses. I notice that the doors of the travelling cottage are partially open, and that a buxom woman is leaning over a sort of splash-board and lazily submitting herself to the drowsy influence of the heat of the day and the perfumes of the meadows. A second house on wheels follows; then a waggon heaped high with tent-poles and baggage; next a cart similarly

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weighted; and finally a decorated car containing half-a-dozen men and women. "Richards's Theatre Royal" is emblazoned in gold and blue on this last carriage. It is a procession of the best known strolling players of the time, and it moves along like a pageant in a panorama. I pause to watch the cavalcade as it passes by me. One of the drivers stops to pluck from the hedgerow some bunches of hay, which have been left on tree and bramble by the waggons that have been carrying the grass-harvest to an adjacent farm. He gives the dainty morsels to his horses, and they go munching and plodding on until they disappear round the next bend of the road, and I wonder whether they will go right over the top of the distant hills and down into the country beyond, where the palace is that is more wonderful than anything Ulysses saw in all his travels.

While I am tracing in my infantile mind the course of the show-people's route, I am conscious of some one passing me as if de-

sirous of doing so unobserved. It is a shadow that first attracts my attention, a shadow of short petticoats and long legs; a shadow with a bundle in one hand and a hat in the other; a shadow with a head that bends as if to seek the shelter of the hedge on the opposite side of the road; a shadow that was destined once again to fall across my thoughts and disturb my dreams.

"It is Connie!" I exclaim, as the figure goes by following the shadow.

Neither one nor the other halt as I speak. They hurry on towards the cloud of dust that follows the show-people's caravan.

"Connie! Connie!" I call.

There is no reply. I am very tired, but I forget it and follow her quickly.

"What is the matter, Connie?" I ask, when I overtake her.

"Nothing," she answers, turning towards me a face that is white in spite of the heat.

"Nothing?" I repeat, interrogating.

"Nothing," she says; "why do you ask?"

"I don't know."

"Very well, then, don't interrupt me."

"Do I interrupt you?"

"Yes, you do."

"Oh," I say, for the want of any other reply.

"What are you following me for?"

"I only thought I would like to speak to you."

"Then you had better not; because I am a bad, wicked girl."

"No you are not, Connie," I answer, promptly.

"I am, and you must not tell any one you have seen me."

"I will not if you don't wish me to," I answer.

"You had better not go home along this road; go over the fields."

"Why?"

"You will perhaps meet my grandmother, and she will kill you."

"Oh no she won't, I'm not afraid of her," I reply.

"I am," says Connie, adding almost in a whisper, "I hate her!"

"Has she been beating you?"

The girl lays down her bundle by the road-side, and, withdrawing one of her arms from the little sleeve of her frock, shows me her shoulder, all bruised.

"Poor Connie!" I say, as she slips her arm once more into her sleeve, "I wish I were a man, I would beat her."

"She will never beat me again," says the girl, "so it does not matter this once."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am not going to do anything—I am doing it."

"What?"

"You like me?" she says.

"Very much, Connie."

"And I like you. Will you promise not to say you have seen me to-day, and I will tell you what I am doing?"

"Yes."

"I am running away!"

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"Over the hills?"

"Over the hills and far away," she answers with a smile that nearly makes me cry, there is so little of mirth in it.

"Let me go with you."

"No, no, you have a happy home."

"Have I?"

"Yes, you know you have, and you are not old enough to leave it."

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"I am nine," I say, "but I am nearly as tall as you."

"But not so lonely and wretched," she says, and with that she bursts into tears and flings herself on the strip of grass that margins the road-side, where a hoppled pony is cropping the herbage, pausing now and then as if to look at us.

I kneel down by Connie's side, but I say nothing. One of her arms is stretched out along the grass. I stroke it tenderly. Pre-

sently her hand seeks mine, and her fingers close over it convulsively.

To-day I look back and see that pathetic road-side picture of childish despair, and I hear the evening song of the thrush that sang as joyously all the time as if the world teemed with happiness and love.

"Good-bye, Horace Durand," says the girl, rising to her feet and wiping her eyes.

"No, no!" I say, "come home with me and I will ask my father to let you live with us."

"Good-bye!" is all she says, but she puts her arms round me and kisses me.

Then my own eyes are filled with tears and I cling to her.

"Don't leave me, Connie!" I say, "I am lonely too."

"Good-bye," she says, "you have given me your promise not to tell. Good-bye, my dear, dear friend!"

The next thing that I remember, until I reached home, was that I was alone on the

dusty highway with a handful of crushed roses, which to-day typify to me the sorrows and troubles of that sunny summer when Constance Gardner ran away.

CHAPTER IV.

FUNERAL CHIMES AND MARRIAGE BELLS.

Night had fallen upon hill and dale, upon dusty road and running brook, before I reached home. Lights were twinkling here and there in cottage windows, and it appeared as if Oakfield House had specially illuminated itself. It was lighted up, spare bedrooms and all.

Mr. Jonas Welby met me at the door. He was standing on the threshold with his hands in his pockets, more than ever it seemed to me master of the situation.

"The return of Ulysses," he said, as I walked in front of him; "and have you beheld the Pleiads, the Bear, and the Waggoner?

I did not reply, but attempted to push past my obstructor.

"Not so fast, my friend," said Mr. Welby, "we have been hunting for you everywhere, and your absence demands an explanation."

"I will tell my father where I have been," I said.

"I fear not; an hour ago you might have done so; at the present moment the doctors say he is not to be disturbed on any account."

"The doctors!" I exclaimed, in alarm, dropping my poor faded and crushed flowers at the feet of my tormentor.

"The doctors!" he said, "your father is dangerously ill. I am here to tell you so, and to prevent you from exciting him by your presence. He has asked for you many times, but not lately; he is insensible."

"Oh! Mr. Welby, let me see him!" I said, as I leaned against the door-post, half fainting with terror and weariness.

"No, Sir! Already you have frightened

your mother almost out of her wits with visions of your being brought home on a shutter, or notified as drowned. If you were my son, Horace Durand, I would teach you something different."

"I am not your son," I said, pulling my self together for a moment, but only to burst into tears the next.

"That's true; it is a good thing for both of us," he said.

"Oh, Mr. Welby, why do you hate me so?" I exclaimed; "I have done nothing to make you! But let me go into the house, pray do! Let me see my father!"

"The doctors forbid it; they say it might be his death," he answered, thrusting himself in my way.

"My mother, then," I said.

"She is at your father's bed-side."

"And he has asked for me?"

"Over and over again," said my tormentor, calmly.

"Then I will see him," I exclaimed, suddenly dashing past him, he after me, and

presently arresting my progress with his strong hand twisted into my collar.

"You young scoundrel!" he said, in a hoarse whisper, "I will shake the life out of you if you attempt to go anywhere but yonder into the kitchen."

He thrust me forward into the room where Carky Jones was sitting crying by the fire.

"You beast!" I exclaimed, quivering with rage and indignation, as I confronted the closed door.

"Come here, Horace," said Jones, "don't be a bad, wicked boy."

"I am not."

"Yes, you are; come here."

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Your father has had an accident with one o'them new constrapshuns of his at the factory; doctors say its eternal, and has hurt his heart," said the girl, "and the greyhounds at the Angel Inn have bin howlin and goin on all the afternoon, just as they did when Lawyer Tibbins died."

* * * *

At ten minutes to five the next morning my father died. He was conscious and he looked happy. I kissed him at his request, and he passed away with his hand in mine. My mother sat weeping by the bedside. The doctors were in the dining-room down stairs. I did not know that the dear kind old gentleman was dead until they came up and said so. One of them led me into an adjoining room, patting my head in a kindly way. The morning sun was streaming in at the window, the birds were singing, and I could hear the music of the river just as if nothing had happened. But it was quite true that my father was dead; and so strongly had the stories he loved to tell me taken possession of my mind, that, in a vague sort of way, I felt as if he were Ulysses and I indeed his son Telemachus. I look back now and feel that this was only the tribute of a naturally affectionate nature to a doting father, who loved me so much that he was anxious to introduce me into that dream-world he knew so well. He might have pre-

ferred to lead my mother into those romantic and poetic paths which he traversed in imagination accompanied by the music of his cello, but she was no apt pupil in that direction. I was, and he loved me with all his tender and gentle yet passionate nature. He died a martyr to science. Many a family has lived and prospered and many a township has grown rich through the mechanical revelations which he left behind him. I love France for his sake, and the paths he trod as a boy are dear to me for all time.

* * * *

The "art of skipping" is, I am told, cultivated more persistently by the novel-reader than by the critic. I propose to move along at this period of my story in sympathy with both. I am going to "skip," as nimbly as consistency of narrative will permit, the years that at this point separate the boy from the man.

The disappearance of Constance Gardner may be regarded as the *dénouement* of the

first decade of my life. Not that the incident assumed this importance at the time. It was overshadowed by the death of my father and the marriage (within a year of his decease) of his widow to Mr. Welby. When I first read "Hamlet" the idea of the funeral baked meats coldly furnishing forth the marriage feast revived in my mind sad and painful memories. Not that there was anything indecorous in the re-entry of my mother into the married state, either as to the time or the manner of it. The dear old Frenchman who believed in the English heart was buried with great state. He was mourned not exactly in sack-cloth and ashes, but in the most ample form of crape and merino. The bells of the old church of Scarsdale marked the slow gait of the funeral procession with muffled peals. Along the route the shops were closed, and the blinds were drawn down at all the private houses; for it was remembered that the Anglo-French designer and inventor had materially improved the trade of the town.

Strange to say, in many after years, when I projected my memory back into the past, I saw, in the pictures it conjured up, the face of Connie Gardner. I regard this as strange, because she had no associations with the inner life of Oakfield House. Her life was a thing apart from mine. I only saw her outside my home. She was not exactly an acquaintance who was forbidden me. It had, I suspect, never occurred to my father or mother that I should be likely to know Connie Gardner, except as a young person not to know. Yet she had mixed herself up in my tenderest recollections. I saw her tearful face, and heard her voice in all my pictures of home, and in the music of the later years when Scarsdale was only a memory. The day came when I learnt that the chord which her sorrowful words had touched in my heart was love, though the revelation was untowardly brought about.

At the funeral of my father I made the acquaintance of my great-uncle, the brother of my mother's father, a straight-backed, formal,

upright, honourable, but somewhat eccentric, English gentleman. He was known in the Worcestershire Valley, where he lived, as honest Dick Grantley. He was a Justice of the Peace, and had a pretty little estate. As proud as the most aristocratic man in the county, he was still called Dick Grantley. He walked by my side in the funeral procession, took my hand in church, patted it furtively when I cried, and when all was over took me for a long walk in the fields beyond Oakfield House, and said little or nothing all the way there and back. He was a tall athletic, white-headed gentleman, with a florid complexion and a large bony hand. When we came home in the afternoon he patted my mother's hand, just as he had patted mine, and kissed me on the forehead. My mother looked very sweet and young, and pretty, in her black gown. Uncle Grantley said so. I heard him. He said something about girls marrying old men, and I think it was in disparagement of such unions. My mother said my father had

always been kind and considerate, and that he had denied her nothing. Mr. Welby came in, while we were all sitting together round the first fire of the autumn season, and asked my uncle to make an appointment on the next day to go into "the deceased's affairs." I remember his very words. I forget very little connected with Mr. Welby, and I remember nothing that does not even now jar on my sensibilities.

I think my uncle saw that I had a childish antipathy for my mother's trustee (my father had left him with my mother full power over his property whatever and wherever it might be), for on the next day he said—

"You don't like your mother's trustee, Mr. Welby?"

"No, Sir."

"Why do you not like him?"

"He has a loud voice, and says I am a chip of the old block."

"Oh, indeed!" said my uncle, "is that all?"

"I think so."

"Do you like me?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Very much?"

"Not as much as father!" I answered, the tears in my eyes, almost for the first time since the dear gentleman's death, for I had only just realised the solemn fact that Oakfield House knew him no more.

"No, no, of course not, but for an uncle I am not so bad; for an uncle, eh? Not the sort of uncle that took the children into the wood and left them there, eh?"

"No, Sir."

"Look at me, Horace!" he went on, taking me between his knees, "I am an old fellow, and I have no children. If ever you should be unhappy here, and your mother is willing for you to come and live with me, and let me be your father, I will give you a home, and make a gentleman of you. Do you hear what I say?"

"Yes, Sir; I thank you."

"Will you remember it?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Is that all you have to say?"

I laid my hand in his and looked up into his genial ruddy face.

"What are you thinking about, little one?"

"Is your home over the hills yonder?" I asked.

"Yes, miles away."

"Near the Palace?"

"What Palace?" he asked.

"The one that is grander than anything Ulysses saw?"

"Well, no," he answered; "but we have several palaces in Worcestershire that will answer as well, I dare say."

"But I must stay at home and take care of my mother as the son of Ulysses did," I said, my little mind wandering back to the incident in which my father had challenged my affection and courage in the presence of Mr. Welby.

"You know all about Ulysses, then?"

"Yes, Sir; my father used to read the great book to me, and tell me of his adventures."

"Ah, well, there is not the same reason for you to remain at home as there was in the case of that other young man in the classics; but stay and take care of your mother, Horace, as long as you like, and when she can spare you come to the Cedars at Breedon."

"Yes, Sir."

"I have arranged with your mother that you shall write to me a letter every week; you can write, of course?"

"Not a letter."

My uncle rang the bell in the hotel parlour where this interview took place.

"Pens, ink, and paper," he said.

These materials being brought, he said, "Now, little one, write down my name and address."

I took up a pen, blushed, dipped it in the ink, blacked my fingers by seizing the pen-holder too low down, and proceeded to write in a big round-hand, "Uncle Grantley."

"Very good," he said, looking over my shoulder. "Now write Richard Grantley,

Esquire, J.P. The Cedars, Breedon, Worcestershire."

With a little assistance I accomplished the feat.

"Very well. Here is a guinea to pay for postage-stamps, and now we may say good-bye; here comes the coach."

He rang the bell again.

"Send the young person here, Mrs. Durand's servant?"

Carky Jones responded to the summons.

"Take my nephew home and be good to him," said the Worcestershire J.P.

"Yes, Sir," she said, curtseying with remarkable humility for Jones.

"Very good," he said, slipping a guinea into her hand.

She looked at the money, curtseyed even more deferentially than before, and in a few minutes afterwards I stood, my hand in hers, watching the coach depart in the direction of the hills that shut Scarsdale from the world. The "Royal Mail" coach was the last on the road. It ran between the little

Derbyshire borough and the nearest railway station a dozen miles away. Many years previously it had been a famous coach on the highway that linked Scarsdale with the Great City.

My uncle had no doubt sufficient prescience to forecast the future of my mother and Oakfield House, and he saw evidently the possibility of the time arriving when my mother's love might be weaned from her first-born. Within twelve months the muffled chime that made doleful music at my father's funeral was succeeded by a wedding peal, rung out joyously on the same bells. The parson who had met that funeral procession in which I walked hand-in-hand with uncle Grantley joined the hands of the widow and Mr. Welby. A bevy of bridesmaids flung flowers at the feet of the bride. The factory hands had a holiday, and a great dinner was spread for them under a tent at the King's Head. Mr. and Mrs. Welby went away in a carriage and four horses, and Carky Jones insisted on my going to bed unusually early

that night. I remember that I sat on the edge of my little bedstead (while the sun was setting behind the hills) looking out along the roadway that went up to the very top of the highest of them, and that there was a vague but bitter sense of wrong in my heart. Before my mother left she had taken me up into her arms and wept over me, and my step-father had somewhat roughly dragged me away from her.

"Horace," he said, "you must not make your mother cry."

"I don't wish to do so," I answered.

"There, don't argue, my lad!" he replied, "good bye!"

He took my hand, but without pressure on either side.

"I said good bye," he remarked.

"Say good bye, dear," said my mother, with a look of frightened appeal in her beautiful eyes.

"Good bye, Sir!" I said.

As he hurried my mother away, he turned to say to me in a whisper that came

through his white teeth with a hissing sound, "We will alter this stubborn nature of yours one of these days, Master Horace Durand Ulysses!"

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH MY UNCLE SAYS I AM A LUCKY DOG.

The time soon came when Mr. Welby put his hatred of me into practice. His persecution was all the more galling that he succeeded in making my mother believe that I really was the young termagant he continually declared me to be. Mr. Welby was one of those humbugs who proclaim their honesty and sense of justice, one of those irrepressible individuals who pose before the world as frank, outspoken, and honourable on the strength of a loud voice and a generally brusque and noisy manner; one of those ill-mannered men who mistake rudeness for wit, and practise it at

the expense of other people. Mr. Welby fired all his spare witticisms at me. He was fond of telling people of my childish escapades, to which he invariably added imaginary incidents with a view of making me appear ridiculous. He still lives, a vulgar, ostentatious parvenu, Member of Parliament for the Northern Division of the county in which I was born, a self-made man, a Radical among the Radicals, hitherto an unsuccessful candidate for office, but a thorn in the side of Liberal Premiers, not by reason of his personal or political power, but by dint of his strength of jaw and his capacity for asking questions and inventing hostile motions. It is known that he has his price, which is office, but as yet every Minister has had sufficient respect for himself and his party to refuse the comfort of Mr. Welby's silence on the conditions named.

It is not necessary that I should dwell upon the troubles of my life, in these early days of the second decade of my existence.

The reader will hardly need to be told that I soon obtained leave to accept my uncle's invitation to go and stay at Breedon. I never returned to Scarsdale.

My uncle was a bachelor. He devoted his spare hours to my education. In this he was assisted by the local parson, a pleasant wine-drinking learned divine. I had, to begin with, a fair knowledge of French, and I picked up Latin with a rapidity that astonished my tutors. It was often debated whether I should be sent to college. The question was generally left to me. I always decided it in the negative. I preferred to stay with my dear old uncle. He was delighted at the response. So was I that my views were accepted. I learnt to ride, and shoot, and swim. Nobody ever called me Frenchy. I grew up a sprightly and happy youth. My mother wrote to me occasionally from Brampton Hall. Oakfield House was given over to Mr. Welby's manager. The partner in the firm of Scarsdale mill-owners eventually became sole proprietor. He was glad to

wipe his hands of me. My mother had become quite illustrious for her charities; he eminent as a politician. I have a theory that as a rule women who give up their lives to doctoring the aged, visiting the sick, and interesting themselves in nothing but poverty, are seeking a diversion from the pangs of a rooted sorrow. There are notable and beautiful exceptions; but truly this is the general rule. My mother could not have been happy with Welby after her experience of the gentle artistic life of Oakfield House. She had wealth and "position," such as it was, at Brampton Hall; but she had denied herself the love and companionship of her son, and she was more or less snubbed by the great county ladies, who regarded Mr. Welby as a parvenu, trying to buy his way into high society. My mother found relief in notable and enduring works of charity.

During the ten years I lived at Breedon Col. Tom Ernstone, an old friend of my uncle, took me to France and Germany, and once to Algiers. My attachment to the

classic lore which my father had opened up to me, my early travels and my love of adventure, gained for me the sobriquet of young Ulysses. Since those days I have been referred to in newspaper reports and at public dinners as "a modern Ulysses," a title which I venture to use for these random reminiscences, not that I desire to challenge comparison either with the original hero or with the travels of General Grant, the famous American President. I have seen the world, and when I am an old man I may justify the compliments of my friends; for I shall be a traveller all my life, I think, unless an event which my uncle set his mind upon, long before I was twenty, should form the post-script to this present narrative.

* * * *

At a little over twenty years of age I was what some people call a "young county swell" who patronised local literature with a dilettante pen. One day, to my great surprise, I was applied to in a charming

feminine hand for a contribution to a new magazine, to be called *The Mayfair Magazine*. An editorial suggestion that a page of real county life or country sport, from a gentleman's point of view, would be most acceptable. If you should happen to be in a library where there is a file of the publication in question, turn to the first number, and you will find an article entitled "The Feast of St. Partridge: How it was celebrated by Mr. Horatio Fitzhoward." That is a true sketch, only the names of some of the persons being fictitious. In recalling it, I remember how I read the manuscript to Helen Dunstan, my genial host's daughter, and how she wished I had not thought it necessary to speak of her father as a lord. "For," said she, in her democratic way, "I am sure his wines would have tasted as well to the reader, and his meadows would have smelt as sweet, had you let him be the plain English commoner he is." It was no use explaining to her that the fashionable constituency to be attracted by *The Mayfair Magazine* would expect its

writers to be continually hob-nobbing with lords, and that, after all, my paper was history; she stood up for the dignity of commoners, though she was only a girl.

My companions in arms, as I think I stated in my first literary effort outside the *Breedon County Times*, were Stephen Miller, then a Queen's Counsel, now a Judge; young Paul Ferris, a rich county fellow about my own age, whose father had left him a large property; Sir Christopher Hallam, a young Yorkshire baronet; George Harmer, a decorative artist engaged upon some work at the manor-house, and who had made himself so agreeable to Mr. Dunstan that our host had invited him to share in the general hospitalities of the place; the Rev. Martin Masters, the vicar of Breedon, sometime my Latin tutor; and Col. Tom Ernstone, an Indian officer, who, though somewhat cynical, was the life and soul of the party. He was full of interesting anecdote, though except on rare occasions he related to us no incidents of

his fighting days in India. He gave us illustrations of the courage of other men, never any examples of his own. He had his tiger story of course, but he was not the hero of it; he had assisted at the relief of Lucknow, but his reminiscences were chiefly of Havelock and Campbell. The Colonel and the Queen's Counsel, Miller, evidently did not love each other. They were too well bred to show this except during quiet passages of repartee, in which the Q. C. scored in point of wit. Mr. Miller had a habit of making you feel that he considered himself everybody's superior, except in the case of "starchy Dick Grantley." He was always amiable towards his "old friend," as he invariably called my uncle when speaking of him. Miller was a remarkable man in appearance and manner. His face was like the close-shaven, clean-cut, aristocratic faces you see in the old pictures of a by-gone aristocracy, with lips perhaps a trifle too thin for a generous character and a jaw of more than usual force of line. He had a somewhat arrogant manner, as will be

best illustrated by a remark which Colonel Ernstone made to him in response to the emphatic expression of an opinion with which he disagreed.

"Thank Heaven we are not the defendants in a great suit which you are trying from the Bench," said Ernstone.

"The verdict would certainly go against you if the jury acted on my summing-up," responded Miller.

"And if it were a hanging matter?" continued Ernstone, until he was interrupted.

"You would by this time have been sentenced," said the Q. C. with a laugh that was hard and uncongenial.

Poor Harmer! We little thought that, in the days to come, he was destined to establish Miller's sense of justice in that higher sphere which the Q. C. was yet to occupy. The decorative artist had very pleasant traits. He was singularly modest, almost humble. His one ambition was to save enough money to complete a course of

study at Amsterdam. His *beau idéal* of art was that of Holland. He had begun his career in a small way at the Hague and appeared to love the Dutch country more than his own.

"No," he said, in response to some encouraging observations of mine about his future, "I never hope to be more than a decorative painter; I would like to do more, and yet after all there is plenty of room for ambition in what is called decorative art."

I took a fancy to this young fellow Harmer. It was decreed that I should meet him again under very singular circumstances; and he was doomed to trials and disasters far more serious than those which had been written down for my probationary exercise this side "the world to come;" though Ulysses himself hardly had a narrower escape from a hideous death than was prepared for me by savages hardly less revolting than the man-eaters of the classic romance.

I have recently re-read my little sketch,

entitled "The Feast of St. Partridge." It is to me another slide in the dream-like kaleidoscope of the past which you and I, dear friendly reader, have been turning round together. The feeling which it excites in my mind is similar to that which is aroused by the perusal of some notes written for Mrs. Gatty and *Aunt Judy* years ago, portions of which I have reproduced in illustration of the system of "Dames' Schools" in the years that are gone. I feel as if I were reading about some one else, not myself; and it is this sense of self-effacement which I hope will enable me to set down in these pages events and opinions that, related by me under other circumstances, might appear arrogant and self-sufficient.

Since that merry shooting party chronicled in *The Mayfair Magazine*, as previously mentioned, Stephen Miller has not only become a judge, but he has tried George Harmer for felony, without the prisoner remembering the judge, or the judge the prisoner. Harmer at this moment,

I believe is———. But let us, for the time being, keep our attention upon that "Feast of St. Partridge," which I suspect may be taken as the clasp that binds up the second decade of my life.

Warrington Manor is a pleasant old house in a Worcestershire valley, with the Breedon Hills as a foreground, a rich grassy plain as middle distance, and the Malverns as a delicate outline against the horizon. In some conditions of the weather the Malverns look mountainous; at other times they are graceful unpretentious hills. My Worcestershire friends are very proud of them, and I used to think the whole world had no hills so lovely in their undulating outline as the Malverns. They were gentle and soft in form and colour compared with the mountains of Scarsdale. Since I was a lad at Breedon I have seen many countries and sojourned in many lands. Not long since at five o'clock in the morning on the Canadian frontier, at a railway station, I was awakened from a troubled sleep in a

Pullman car to "hurry up and have breakfast," and there I saw tier upon tier of Malvern Hills, with grey mist floating about their summits, their base reflected in the waters of a calm lake. In this latter respect they eclipsed my Malverns, but of course that only sent my memory back to excuse them for the delightful associations they mirrored in my memory. The rival scene was I think at a place called Island Pond, and I remember that there were among other things fresh lake trout caught close by the railway track for breakfast. Since those days of the gun and the rod in Worcestershire, I have dreamed dreams under Italian skies; I have shot grebe (when no Turk was looking at me) on the Bosphorus; I have slept on the Danube; I have looked out from an Erie railway car upon the Delaware near Callicoon; I have rested in quiet nooks on the Susquehana, and hunted with the Indians far away beyond Quebec. I have seen a tropical landscape lifted out of a grey mist by the rising sun,

have rested by the side of oases in Asian deserts, have sojourned in the famous grazing countries of the Southern States of America, and trodden unexplored islands in the Eastern seas.

Yet have I never seen fields so green, never heard song-birds carrol so sweetly as I have seen, and heard, on the estate of my late friend Peter Dunstan, Esq. J.P. at Warrington Manor, in the county of Worcester, England. On that festival of St. Partridge, to which I have referred, we met at breakfast at the early hour of half-past seven. The ladies had not come down. We talked of guns, and birds, and dogs, over savoury omelettes, game-pies, stewed grouse, dry toast, claret cup, and coffee. Dunstan was at the head of his table, his wheel-chair having landed him safely in the dining-room before any of his guests had appeared. Squire Dunstan, as the local people called him, had lost the practical use of his legs in an attack of rheumatic gout. He was of a lazy habit of body, though clear

and active in mind, and he did not appear to regret what was called his infirmity. He had a chair in which he wheeled himself about with great ease and freedom, and this absence of the usual physical action of body made him "a mere calculating machine," Miller said. But he was more than that; he was a genial, hospitable, well-informed gentleman, though his hobby was money-making. He had begun life as a London merchant. At three-and-twenty he inherited his father's business and fifteen thousand a year from London rents. Two years later he sold both the one and the other, bought large mineral properties in Wales, extensive manufacturing works in Staffordshire, started a bank in London, and lived to be the richest high sheriff who had ever driven in state to meet the judges at Worcester. The pageantry of that occasion, and the snub put upon him by a local lord who abhorred trade and talked grandly about *parvenus*, are traditions of the county. Miss Dunstan has nobly revenged her father on Lord Trellisford since

then; and the javelins of the shrievalty ornament the hall of Warrington Manor to this day.

I remember that at breakfast young Ferris discovered with lively horror that the vicar shot with a muzzle-loader.

"When I was a young fellow," replied the vicar, a ruddy grey-haired cleric of sixty, "the pleasure of hunting as well as shooting was combined in the celebration of what you are pleased to call the feast of St. Partridge. We did not shoot for the glorification of merely killing; we found pleasure in the exercise of tramping through the stubbles in the brisk autumn weather; and we thought nothing of walking twenty miles for ten or a dozen brace of birds."

"Did you not, indeed?" exclaimed Paul Ferris; "had you no drivers?"

Paul was a fair-haired delicate-looking young fellow, about my own age, and often blushed like a girl.

"We drove our own game, Sir," said the vicar.

"Yes," said Paul, "I don't think I should like that. I have stood at a corner with the Duke and shot a hundred and fifty brace of pheasants right off the reel."

The Duke was an illustrious member of the house of Orleans, whose English home was in the valley.

"That was simply murder," said the vicar; "to shoot in that fashion, Sir, with all submission to yourself and the Duke, is to degrade sport into mere butchery."

Paul Ferris blushed and said he was sorry the vicar thought so; and the Q.C. proceeded to deliver an oration upon the combination of causes which formed what is called the charm of the First of September, such as the vanity of skill as a "shot," the excitement of letting off your piece, the exercise of man's brutal desire to slay, and to temper this depravity the innate love of nature, of trees and fields, and hills and

dales and out-door exercise, that is an English characteristic.

Nobody could say whether Mr. Miller meant what he said, or whether he was amusing himself at our expense. He was probably doing the latter, while exhibiting himself to us, controversionally; for he propounded wise propositions on both sides of the question under consideration.

At the close of his remarks he said "Some men like a spice of danger in their sport. The other day a friend of mine, shooting small game on a German estate, quoted this view of that class of Englishmen who seek the dangers of sport on the American prairies. 'Ah!' responded one of the company, 'you like danger mit your sport. Then you go out shooting mit me. The last time I shoot mine bruder-in-law in ze schtomack!'"

Thereupon the vicar told a story. The anecdotical vein struck by Miller was quite to his reverence's taste. Hallam had remarked that he feared the wind was getting

up a little, and that on the hill-side we should have it right in our teeth.

"Never fire," said the vicar, "when the birds are coming at you with the wind. The plan is to turn round upon them, and get a steady long shot. Do you know Swinstead, the chairman of the Petty Sessions?"

"Quite well," said Hallam.

"Know his man?"

"I cannot say that I do."

"Ah, a queer character, old Swinstead; he has a crotchet for making his man agree with him, whatever he says or professes to think, no matter how extravagant the idea may be. Half valet, half butler, his man is continually with him. He rarely keeps a servant more than six months. They get exasperated with his crotchets, and leave. He has an Irishman now, however, who seems likely to stay. The old fellow put Pat to a severe test the other day, and ould Ireland came out of it with flying colours. It was a particularly boisterous day. "There

is not much wind to-day,' said old Swinstead to his man. Pat hesitated, but he was not lost, as they say the fair ones are who come within the fascination of our friend Miller. 'I said there is not much wind to-day,' said Pat's master, with special emphasis. 'No, your honour,' said Pat, 'not much; what there is is uncommon high to be sure!'"

The story amused Sir Christopher immensely.

Mr. Miller said he knew Swinstead quite well, and he related how he and my uncle Grantley had bagged there, in one day, a hundred and ninety-five head of miscellaneous game, including sixty brace of birds.

The vicar insisted that such sport as that bordered on the murderous phase of modern shooting, and the controversy was becoming rather warm, when Colonel Ernstone hit the vicar slyly upon the unclerical character of a sporting parson.

"Ah!" said the vicar, "that reminds me

of a little incident which occurred in the early life of my worthy diocesan. He was what you call a shooting parson. When he was visiting Lady Hadley—she is very evangelical you know—he proposed to accompany her son on a little shooting expedition. The old lady remonstrated mildly, but at length sought consolation in the belief that out of evil would come good. Thomson, her gamekeeper, was not at all up to her religious standard, so she urged the bishop to say a few words of exhortation to the man when they should be in the fields together. His lordship took an opportunity, on the return homewards, to advise Thomson to go to church regularly, and read his Bible. 'Why, I do read my Bible,' said the keeper, 'but I don't find in it any mention of the apostles going a shooting.' 'No, my good man,' said the bishop, 'you are right; there was no good shooting in Palestine; so they went fishing.'"

"A good story, vicar," said Sir Christopher,

"it is something like one Mr. Miller once told at the club, only it was about an affair at a theatre; I never laughed so much. Will you repeat it, Mr. Miller?"

"Do you know the cue?" Miller replied, "or I ought to say, Do you remember the case?"

"No, I really do not," said Paul, blushing.

"I am sorry," said the Q.C., "but it is just as well that you have neither the cue nor the case, for the story might be a long one, and here comes Hallam."

All this time Sir Christopher Hallam (or Chris, as the Colonel called him) was out looking after the guns and discussing coveys with the keepers. Our chat ended with the re-appearance of our two friends and their report that the head-keeper with the dogs was coming round from his cottage.

How the day comes back to me! Light mists on the hills; rosy apples hanging in clusters from bending trees in red and brown hedgerows; dewy gems on the green leaves

of mangel-wurzel and turnip; the stubble crackling under our feet; the rising of the first covey of birds; the answering echoes of the guns; the cool shadows of the great elms; the crows cawing warning signals to each other and sailing away to distant feeding grounds; our rest for luncheon, with the sweet pipe that followed it. And, when the day was done, the bath and the dressing for dinner, and entering the drawing-room deliciously tired to be received by Helen Dunstan, the Squire, and my dear old uncle, who had driven over from "The Cedars" where we lived, half-a-dozen miles from Warrington Manor.

The Q.C. I remember took Helen Dunstan in to dinner. I was appointed to the honour of escorting the Vicar's wife. The meal was dispatched in a quiet business-like way. There were coffee and music afterwards in the drawing-room. But it was late when we joined the ladies. The fault was not mine, nor Ernstone's, nor Hallam's. The Squire had some fine old Madeira, and both the

Vicar and Miller liked Madeira. Moreover Mr. Dunstan gave them his views in regard to certain stocks which were fluctuating considerably in the money-market. Miller had made many a cool hundred on the hints he had picked up at Warrington Manor. The Vicar speculated a little, and my uncle, who hated city life, and city men, and banking and railways, "and the whole thing, Sir," had nevertheless occasionally bought shares in Companies he knew nothing about and sold them again to persons of whom he was equally ignorant, through a broker whom he had never seen.

My uncle was comparatively poor; poor in pocket but rich in pride; a straight-backed, high-collared, warm-hearted man. When first the Dunstans came into the county, some few years prior to this not-to-be-forgotten first of September, he resented the intrusion. Dunstan made too much of a splash with his new horses and carriages for the poorer county families.

"Damme!" I remember my uncle saying,

"if he thinks he is going to drive straight into county society he is mistaken; not with a team fit for a circus and a carriage like a showman's caravan, at all events."

But the time soon came when the smaller luminaries of county society, and my uncle among them, found that Peter Dunstan, Esq. was not a bad sort of fellow, and that his Port and Madeira had not their equal in the entire county.

And on this famous first of September my uncle and her father, I learnt afterwards, had a serious talk about my future and her future. I sometimes think she must have known about it, for she let her hand rest in mine for a little while when she said "good night," and there was an unusual softness in her voice. I thought she was sorry about something, or had a headache. Neither my vanity, nor my discernment, had suggested to me that Helen Dunstan, a lovely girl, and heiress to enormous wealth, was in love with me, starchy Dick Grantley's almost penniless nephew. Do you remember only

two seasons ago the portrait-picture of the year at the Royal Academy? A lady in a riding-habit, leaning against a sleek chestnut. A face of remarkable beauty, indicative, however, of mental strength and great self-control, a liquid gray eye, rich brown hair dressed close to the head, an elegant figure, though somewhat slight; and in her eyes a tender thoughtful expression. "Portrait of Miss Dunstan," you will see in the catalogue; though on that first of September of this present history my uncle slapped me on the back, and said, "Horace, my boy, you are a lucky dog!"

I see him now on the box-seat of his phaeton, with the vicar and Mrs. Martin sitting inside, two bright lamps flashing upon the roadway, Sandy Mackenzie at the horses' heads; I see old Dunstan in his wheel-chair at the porch, and Miss Dunstan, with an Indian shawl flung over her head, come out to say "good night" to their neighbours. I see the lights dancing along the road in the distance; and as the Squire wheels him-

self back into the library I see myself standing there with Helen's soft hand in mine; and I find it all a dream, with strange unlooked-for incidents in it; and another woman (who has no need to beckon me, for I am at her feet only too soon for my own peace) filling the early days of my life with a bitter sorrow, leading to a serious difference between myself and my uncle, and giving, if I may so describe it, the cue to Fate for the commencement of a series of trials, misfortunes, and adventures, which in some respects justify the publication of these volumes.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

You will have gathered from the closing picture of my last chapter that I was a guest at Warrington Manor.

Considering the natural vanity of youth and the distinction which a young fellow obtains among his comrades from any special attention shown to him by a pretty and desirable girl, it was no very terrible crime that I committed in responding warmly to Helen Dunstan's little kindnesses to me, without any other motive than that of feeding my personal vanity.

Confession of a fault is said to constitute at least half atonement. I was interested in

my host's daughter, I liked to hear her talk, to draw her out, to excite her interest in my opinions, to hear her own, and to monopolise her attention. Sir Christopher Hallam did not care about my selfishness, because he was engaged to Colonel Ernstone's daughter. Paul Ferris, I flattered myself, was slightly jealous of me. George Harmer was in the position, more or less, of a guest "on sufferance," and his nature was both gentle and retiring. He would not even have dreamed of competition with any of Dunstan's visitors in anything, unless perhaps one of them had stood upon his scaffolding in the music-room and challenged him to a match at painting Apollos playing on pipes, and great-god Pans "down by the reeds in the river." Stephen Miller was well known as "not a marrying man;" and he had not altogether an enviable reputation among women. It was therefore a poor sort of triumph which I sought in engrossing as much as possible the attention of Helen Dunstan. It might have been better for me, for her too,

had she succeeded at that time in awakening in me those sentiments of love and admiration which were only dormant within my heart. Unfortunately for both of us she did not hold the key that was to unlock them.

On the second day of the partridge-shooting she drove with her father to the luncheon rendezvous and assisted at that delightful ceremony. Dressed in blue serge, a long plait of golden-brown hair hanging down her back, a spray of partridge feathers in her small hat, she was a very Diana in appearance, yet somehow I christened her Donna Quixote, and for the reason that her companion, a friend and governess and waiting-maid and companion in one, reminded me of a female Sancho Panza. Susan Dobbs was ten years older than her mistress, and looked it. A crabbed, clever, unsophisticated, not ill-natured woman, she had an affectionate admiration for Helen, and seconded her in all her views, opinions, and doings. They talked together of everything and everybody.

After luncheon, while Squire Dunstan sat in his carriage smoking, and reading a morning paper that had come down from town by express (carriage and horses were under a shady tree on the road by the gate where we had refreshed ourselves and counted our bag), Helen and Susan seemed inclined to delay their departure. I was tired and gave up my gun to a business visitor whom the Squire had driven over from the Manor, and so we sat, or lolled, upon the rugs and cushions, which the servants had carried to the rendezvous, and discoursed of many things.

"Do you know Thérèse Ernstone?" Helen asked me.

"No, but she is to come on a short visit to 'The Cedars' with her father."

"A beautiful girl," said Helen.

"If she were not too dark," remarked Sancho—Susan I mean, I beg her pardon.

"Dark, is she?" I asked.

"Very," said Susan.

"Don't you like dark people?"

"Not girls," snapped Susan, balancing herself uneasily on a camp-stool.

"Glad I am not a girl," I said.

"You may well be glad," she answered.

"Why?"

"Otherwise you would not be so popular at the Manor."

"Miss Dobbs is in a controversial humour," rejoined Helen, smiling, "I am sure Thérèse is popular here, I only wish she came oftener."

"Sir Christopher, I suppose, must be considered a happy fellow," I said.

"If to be loved by a girl, who is both pretty and clever, should make him happy," replied my hostess.

"And to know that he will have no mother-in-law when he marries," croaked Miss Dobbs.

"Susan, you are really bright to-day if you are a little sour," said my hostess.

"I hate fools!" she answered quickly.

"Now that is rude, Miss Dobbs," said Helen, "I propose that you and I, Mr.

Durand go and sit in the carriage and talk to father; he will be civil to us at any rate."

Miss Dunstan smiled pleasantly as she said so. Susan rose and curtseyed and then resumed her uncomfortable seat.

We walked towards the carriage, Helen and I, and past it, the Squire being still too busy with his paper to be troubled with conversation. I assisted her over an adjacent stile, and the gentle influences of the time, the pastoral beauties of the scene, her gracious manner, and a certain music in her voice that touched me, would quite possibly have thawed my senseless heart completely, but for the war between France and Germany.

"An odd character, Miss Dobbs," I said.

"She is very; but I like her for it."

"And she knows you do."

"You do not think she says these brusque things to please me? Oh no, it is her nature. Her mother married twice, and her stepfather was a brute."

"I have had a similar experience," I answered, "but I do not say rude things to people on that account."

"Oh, but you are different! Susan says she would have married, only for the horrible example of mankind which her stepfather gave her. You are right in saying she is an odd character, and he must also have been odd—the man whom she threw over."

"She threw him over—did she?"

"Yes, and the other day he died, making a will in her favour. He left her three thousand pounds, out of gratitude to her for letting him off a bad bargain. Those were his very words."

"And has that soured her disposition still more?"

"Not at all. She cannot help laughing at the poor dear man, she says, whenever she thinks of the nagging life she would have led him."

"She is funny."

"And as good and true a creature as ever lived."

"I will try and like her then, if only to please you," I said.

"Do you think she does not like you?" Miss Dunstan asked, pausing in the shadow of an elm and confronting me.

"It has not occurred to me to think whether she does or not; but, judging from appearances, I should say she does not."

"Oh, but she does, very much," said the Squire's daughter, "she thinks you handsome, good, manly, and I cannot tell you what!"

"I thank her, and all the more that I hear her good opinion of me from your lips."

"Oh," said my pretty companion, and it flattered me to notice that she blushed.

After a somewhat awkward pause we walked on towards the next stile.

"It must be a terrible thing to have a step-father," said the squire's daughter, "but far worse to have a step-mother. A great lady—at least so the people called her—tried to marry my widowed father a year or

two ago. But bless his dear heart he loved me, and the memory of my mother, too much to be caught. Ah, if my mother had lived, I should have been the happiest girl in the world. Not that I remember her; I was too young when she died. Mr. Grantley was telling us the other day that your mother is very beautiful."

"Yes," I said.

It seemed to me that Miss Dunstan was talking without thinking, and I found myself somewhat bewildered as to my share in a conversation, which was growing forced.

"It is a serious responsibility to be beautiful," I said.

"Indeed," she answered.

"Do you not feel that it is?"

"I feel the compliment of your question," she answered smiling, "and accept it for what it is worth."

"You think I am not sincere?" I asked.

"In what respect?" was her answer.

I began to be conscious that I was tread-

ing upon dangerous ground, but it seemed to be a very pleasant path, nevertheless.

"In my admiration of you."

We had reached the last stile. She placed her soft hand in mine. I pressed it as she mounted it. She was about to speak when a messenger, bursting with his great news, demanded our attention.

"Where be the Squire?"

"What Squire?"

"Squire Dunstan."

"Yonder, in the lane."

"Please tell him I come from Woodnorton, and the Emperor has surrendered to the King o' Prussia and M'Mahon's army be cut all to pieces."

* * * *

Well might Susan Panza say she hated fools. I lived to learn that her shot was levelled at me. The highest point of human happiness for any man, in Susan's estimation, was achieved in being loved by Helen Dunstan. She knew that I was that man. For me not to know it argued that I

was not only a fool, but unworthy of the honour conferred upon me. Had it not been for the Emperor of the French surrendering at Sedan I believe I should not only have discovered that Helen loved me but that I loved Helen. In that case this story might have come to an end with this chapter, or might never have been written.

It was a mutual impulse on the part of both of us to rush back to the carriage with the news, for the Duke d'Aumale was a neighbour of ours. Indeed some of his people, not he, nor any of the princes of his house, but some of his friends, were shooting in the stubbles, not half-a-mile away from the spot where the Squire was reading *The Times*.

"Great heaven!" said the Squire, "what a collapse!"

"One can hardly realise it," said Helen, "when one looks around at this peaceful scene about us."

"And yonder among the trees lies the

shooting-box of the exiled princes!" said the Squire.

"Will they be happier for the fall of their foe, I wonder!" pondered Colonel Ernstone, coming upon the scene, accompanied by Hallam and the Q.C.

"We heard of it from the Woodnorton fellows," said the Q.C. "Hallam shot a hare on their side the hedge, and apologised; then they asked us if we had heard the news; they were handing their guns over to the men, and going back to the house."

"And has the looked-for change in their fortunes really come!" exclaimed the vicar. Is not Napoleon, after all, happier than they? Xerxes wept in the zenith of his glory. Philosophy says he was no longer melancholy after the defeat of his forces."

"You think it must be a relief for the Emperor to have come to the end—to lay down his sword, and with it all the misery of watching and waiting?" asked the Q.C.

"There is always a certain kind of peace at the end of anything," replied the vicar,

"even the great Cardinal's apostrophe to closing greatness has a smack of comfort in it. The banker who has struggled against a run upon his coffers till the bitter end must find a sensation of relief in the closing doors. I am sure Mr. Miller will tell us that the culprit standing through a long trial sits down at last with a calm sense of relief even at the adverse verdict."

Ah! the poor Emperor; if a little party of English sportsmen could not go out into the September meadows to shoot partridges without visions of war and carnage, what dreams must have haunted the soul of him who sought in vain for death amidst the blood-stained ruins of Sedan!

We shot no more that day, and I remained the fool Susan Panza thought me; and all because of that wicked war between France and Germany.

CHAPTER VI.

DISCOURSES OF CRITICISM, LOVE, AND MARRIAGE.

I have heard novelists speak of the difficulty of beginning a story. My chief trouble, having begun, is to get my narrative to advance. The natural tendency to relate all the incidents of one's life in detail delays progress, more particularly when it is thought desirable to say something about one's boyhood. Moreover a writer setting down his own experiences is apt to exaggerate the importance of incidents that remain vividly in his memory. If there is any constructive art in my method of procedure, it will be found in the fact that I deal, in the earliest chapters, with two decades of

my life, the first two ten years. These two periods are covered at the outset, and then dealt with retrospectively and prospectively. The two decades will be completed in this and the eighth chapter of my reminiscences, and the ninth launches me into the third, with, I hope, sufficient impetus to carry me into the calmer waters of the fourth, to sail eventually into port, weather-beaten but sound and seaworthy. I have striven, in the interest of the reader, to devote my attention to landmarks in my career, to affairs that are entertaining in themselves, outside the questions of developing character or plot. To tell the truth, this history of life and adventure has no plot. Whether it has even a hero remains to be seen.

If it has a hero I am he. In a romance of real life it is an advantage to the reader, when the author, intending to be his own hero, boldly avows the fact at the beginning. In that case he usually adopts the simplest form of narrative, which is the autobiographic. "Robinson Crusoe," "David Cop-

perfield," and "Gil Blas," were written on these lines. I venture with all humility to adopt something of the mechanism of the works in question. Their illustrious authors wrote in the first person singular and assumed to be their own heroes. I, who am not illustrious, emulate the method of these great men, adapting it however to the current taste of the moment, which is inclined to be impatient of any elaboration of details. Telegrams have killed the popularity of narratives which relate minute points. Journalistic sketches and personal gossip have called into existence a new form of novel. The newspaper is the chief literary influence of the day. It encourages broad effects in art. The stage responds in spectacle and tableaux. It sets the fashion of a lighter style of writing than that which guided the hands of Smollett and Scott. The world has less time to think than ever it had. Readers are more anxious to arrive at results than they were even as recently as the days of Thackeray and Dickens. Students of Mudie's and Smith's are known to go so far

in this direction of impatient curiosity as to read the third volume of a novel first, and even then begining with the last chapter. Richardson would have driven these accomplished people crazy.

The story-teller who loves his art must still, however, fall back more or less upon the classic models; and possibly "The Decameron" is in many respects the best of them. This mention of the immortal writers of fiction may be regarded by some as an invitation to comparisons which may lead to unpleasant criticism. I cannot help that. Life would not be worth having at the price of always being concerned about what critics may say of your work. Moreover for one unkind judge there are twenty ready to over-estimate the worth of a fairly entertaining book, and the world is big enough for both authors and critics. In my own case, *The Superfine Review* of late years has discoursed so frequently on my deficiencies that it has ceased to be instructive. I think it was at Burlington House where Lord Beaconsfield, speaking of the duties and

desires of Government in regard to the advancement of Art, intimated that it was no forecast of adverse criticism that stayed his action in a certain direction, because he knew well enough, whether he advanced or remained quiescent, his conduct would be objected to all the same. I have a similar sense of comfort in regard to *The Superfine.* Time was when I endeavoured to find wisdom in its reviews. That was in my salad days. Latterly I have become acquainted with more than one of the young sparks, and talked philosophy with more than one of the old fogies, who write in that department of the paper which is condescendingly devoted to literature. Moreover I have written "criticisms" myself, some of them to order, and know what it is for an author or publisher to be under the ban of a journal that criticises to live rather than lives to criticise. Thackeray knew this, and it is a fine thing to be in good company. The illustrious author of *Vanity Fair* and *Esmond* had his critical pest in the shape of *The*

Superfine Review, and showed that a great writer is after all only mortal in resenting the attentions of so small an insect. Uncle Toby found the world large enough for the blue-bottle and himself, and *The Superfine Review* has as much right to live as Thackeray had, and as much right to exercise its functions. There are land-rats and water-rats. There are "skunks" according to Reade, and "bummers" according to Jonathan. There is the vermin of the forest and the vermin of the city, and both have their mysterious uses. That they may not multiply and become intolerable, Nature invents checks for them, checks of wolf and ant-eater; man supplements Nature with checks of trap and gun; and so the world wags and the balances are maintained. Thackeray should have remembered the counterpoises there are in London journalism against *Superfine Reviews*, and then he would not have been tempted to make some people think he had been stung by a hornet when he had only been tickled by a fly.

These remarks are what would be called by a dramatist an "aside," or in more explicit instructions he would mark them down as "spoken apart." Matter of this kind nevertheless helps to convey useful information to an audience; and in the present instance the reader, which is my audience, will have gathered from this "aside" that during my career I have done something more than wield a dilettante pen for a fashionable magazine. How I first came to be associated with journalism was in this wise. Among the frequent visitors at "The Cedars" was Mr. Peregrine Fox, who controlled the destinies of the *Breedon County Times*, which in its turn governed the political fortunes of the western division of the county, and more particularly of the little town from which it took its title. Mr. Fox was an enthusiastic Tory. In that respect his conversation commended itself to my uncle and to the Vicar, his old friend and companion. Inspired probably by the literary and artistic atmosphere in which I

was born, I had not removed to "The Cedars" very long before I flashed my maiden quill in *The Breedon Times*, the occasion being a question of field-paths and rights of way which had agitated "The Cedars" for an entire hunting season, beginning at breakfast before the meet, to be taken up again with the discussion of the day's run at the inevitable dinner-party afterwards. I maintained the sanctity of field-paths and the freedom of established rights of way, with sympathetic references to the Garden of Eden, and eloquent protests against the levelling tendencies of upstarts and parvenus. Recollections of the footway across the fields over which Connie Gardner directed me to walk home, on that day when we parted on the white Derbyshire highway, gave a poetic turn to my defence of field-paths. Hatred of my canting, time-serving, office-seeking, brow-beating step-father put a sting into my denunciations of those levellers who sought to raise themselves into a spurious notoriety

by selfish and wanton attacks on the institutions of the country. My letter was signed "Maximilian Ulysses," in memory of my father, and also as a hint to Mr. Welby, M.P., of the authorship. I sometimes wonder whether I am a Conservative in politics because he is on the other side; that, is supposing I am in any sense a politician. I think that whatever cause Mr. Welby advocated I should oppose it. Therefore I can hardly be regarded as conscientiously belonging to the Tories, the Radicals, the Whigs, or the Liberals. Mr. Peregrine Fox wrote an editorial article on my letter, and proclaimed to the county the possession of a new writer who would one day make his name known throughout the world. He congratulated the Western Division that the new light was on the side of those constitutional principles which had made England great and free, and that it would illuminate the fallacies and dogmas of the Opposition in such a way as would make them palpable to the most superficial judgment. What

illuminating power the local scribbler's pen possessed had however a tendency to seek satisfaction outside the arena of party politics. Such books as I had read, when a child at my father's knee, and such works as I found in honest Dick Grantley's library, stimulated in my mind a taste for romance, for travel, and for history; and it seemed as if the very nickname Welby had given me was destined to assist my aspirations; for just as the mountains of Scarsdale filled my fancy with imaginary journeys to the other side, so in after-years did some barrier continually present itself to my imagination as a border-land between me and my hopes, a border-land to be crossed, a border-land to be left behind in my travels and adventures. "Master Ulysses" in the mouth of my father-in-law, a blight upon me for the time as the scarlet letter was upon Hester Prynne, became in future years a talisman to noble effort, just as the scarlet letter in time became a symbol of virtue and religion. We work out our destinies through devious

paths, and the opposing darts, with which Destiny appears to wound us, are merely the smarts that spur us on to the realisation of the better Fate, which Fortune hides behind the obstacles that are factors in our success.

And how utterly blind we are to what is to come! But for my uncle Grantley I might have been, heaven knows what! Under the severe discipline and brutality of Mr. Jonas Welby, a prig, perhaps a coward, a complacent follower of his self-assertive creed. Time under controlling circumstances might have beaten all the spirit of adventure out of me, and twisted my pen into an academic instrument for prodding authors in the *Superfine Review*. The robust old English fashions of "The Cedars" developed the best qualities of my nature, and the romantic virtues and artistic instincts of my Anglo-French father, with his views of *noblesse oblige*, no doubt tempered in me the unconscious arrogance of "county family" traditions. How utterly blind, I repeat, we are to the future! I have

every reason to believe that but for an accidental circumstance I should have married Helen Dunstan a year after the second decade of my life, a rough sketch of which I am endeavouring to present to the reader.

Helen Dunstan was considered to be the one great prize worth a young man's running for in the matrimonial market of the Western Division of Worcestershire. She was handsome, clever, rich, and, as Sir Christopher Hallam put it to me, there was "no nonsense about her." Above all, as Susan Panza had remarked, the man who won her would not be hampered with a mother-in-law. Her father was an old man and a widower. He rolled in wealth, or, to put it still more literally, wheeled in it. His love for Helen was only second to his love of money-making, and then his delight in *la gourmandise* may be said to have ranked third in his passions. Neither controlling her choice of a husband, nor limiting his endowment of her until his death, Peter Dunstan was a most desirable

father-in-law and friend. After that night when she let her hand lie gently in mine, my uncle told me that "the course was clear" for me.

"If," he said, "you can gain the girl's consent, you need not fear that he will refuse to ratify the bond."

We were sitting in the old-fashioned porch of "The Cedars," on a hot evening after dinner, having (an unusual occurrence) dined alone. Sandy had decanted, under my uncle's supervision, a dusty bottle of port-wine. It was still day-light, though the old church clock across the river had struck seven; and it was still hot, though neither summer nor winter made any difference to my uncle's habit of taking a few glasses of Port or Madeira after dinner. He held up his glass, before the opening of the porch where the twilight had just began to suggest its poetic presence, to watch the delicate indications of Time's tardy flight in the shape of those tiny leaf-like relics called beeswing. The scrutiny being satisfactory,

he sipped the golden liquor and turned it over on his tongue, which, thus pleasantly loosened, began to wag at me.

"Marriage becomes a duty when the woman is above reproach, and her wealth is as abundant as her charms," he said, in reference to a remark of mine which questioned the desirability of a young fellow entering into the responsibility which my uncle had discarded.

"Love is a factor in the business, is it not?" I asked.

"No, Sir, love is for boarding-school wenches and penniless adventurers."

"That is a new reading; it is not in Burton."

"Perhaps not; but, if I remember rightly, he dwelt on the necessity of money. Sandy!"

"Yes, your honour," said Sandy, who was sweeping up the first leaves of the autumn, where they had dotted the green sward with brown and gold and red.

"On the second shelf of the book-case, nearest the fireplace, in the dining-room,

you will see a book bound in parchment, and labelled 'The Anatomy of Melancholy;' bring it here, Sandy."

"I will, your honour," said Sandy, disappearing.

"Respect and mutual forbearance one for the other," said my uncle, "is the secret of a happy married life."

"Uncle Grantley!" I said, with that affectionate submissiveness which always characterised my intercourse with him, "may I ask how you know, since you do not speak by experience?"

"Damme, Horace!" he said, "do you think I was reared like the nigger in that American woman's horribly interesting book you brought here last week? Experience! Do you wish to imply that I had no father or mother?"

"No, Sir, heaven forbid! But, in such serious business of life as marriage, the best opinion is surely that of personal experience," I replied.

"I am glad to hear you call it business,

and not love," he said, "whereby you show an inclination to a proper estimate of the position in which you stand. My father and mother were the happiest couple in these parts. They did not marry for love. The estates of their people were adjacent. My mother had a heavy jointure. My father lost a good deal of it at a gambling club in London. But they never forgot the respect they mutually owed to each other. My father treated her all his life with the politeness due to her rank. He found continual pleasure in her society. He never neglected a wish or a desire which she expressed, or even hinted at. She adorned his life with her many virtues. She smoothed their mutual paths with a fair estate; she was a beautiful woman, and a good mother. He committed a great act of folly in staking half her estate on a bet in a London hell; but he laid the lesson of it to heart all his life, and managed their joint properties in after-life so well that they recovered from the strain that he had foolishly put upon them. Gambling was the vice of

the rich in those days, and it was not confined to the men. Lady Bartley, over the river yonder, pawned her family jewels, and lost the Nettley property at cards."

"Would it be impertinent to ask why you never married, uncle?"

"No, Sir; the necessity never arose, and the opportunity never presented itself. I was an only son, very fond of my home, warmly attached to my mother, and a rake; a curious mixture, eh? I never met the woman whom I could have consented to live with, and most women, I believe, regarded me as not the sort of fellow they could trust. Ah! here comes your mentor, Mr. Burton, a melancholy rhapsodist, who has made more women false, and more men desire that they should be so, than any writer outside Ovid.

"Do you think so, really?"

"I do. But there is one point in which he may be commended. Here you are. He mentions *John de Medicis* as so sensible of the power of riches, that when on his dying bed, calling before him his sons to give them

his blessing, he exclaimed, 'My mind is at rest at this awful moment, when I reflect that I shall leave you, my children, in the possession of good health and abundant riches.'"

"Yes," I said, "that is all very well, but there is nothing in that speech which commends a man's marrying for money."

"No, nor is there in mine, Mr. Critic, I simply say that it is a young fellow's duty to marry, and that what you call love is not a necessary clause in the contract."

"Burton does not support your views."

"I have already said that Burton is a fool on the question of love."

"But you have quoted him on the question of money. I do not underestimate the value of riches, and I hope to earn money enough without sacrificing my liberty."

"Pooh! Your liberty! Why, damme, the best fellows in the county are mad to get into your shoes."

"Why, uncle?"

"They see what everybody can see, that

Dunstan's daughter is ready to say yes to you the moment you ask her."

"Do you believe that, uncle?"

"I do, Horace, and I congratulate you, my boy. With such an alliance there is nothing you may not hope for. Damme, you might go down to Derbyshire and contest the county seat with Welby. I suppose the newspaper men would speak of such a contest as a public scandal. But——"

"I wouldn't care for that," I exclaimed, interrupting the dear old squire.

"Here's your health, then," said my uncle, "Horace Durand, Esquire, Member of Parliament, *vice* Jonas Welby, defeated!"

Fate, if it could be idealised into an on-looking personification, might have laughed at my fond uncle's predictions.

We continued to talk, off and on, till bed-time about the Dunstans, more particularly of Helen, and my future prospects. I confessed that I found the young lady's society agreeable to me, and that I would do nothing to obstruct my uncle's hopes

in that direction. I did not hesitate to say that if his theory were correct as to the conditions of a happy marriage I was hopeful that the end might be as he wished. My respect for Miss Dunstan was unbounded. I admitted that. I also agreed with my uncle in regarding myself as highly complimented by the notice she had taken of me. I did not tell him that I feared what he had said would exercise a certain amount of constraint upon my future intercourse with her. Hitherto I had been perfectly free and unconstrained in my attentions to her, and we had talked with perfect self-control about all manner of things, and I had always been impressed with her common-sense views of life and her intellectual superiority to the other young ladies whom I was in the habit of meeting in society.

"Very well," said my uncle, over the long clay pipe which he invariably smoked in company with a glass of punch before going to bed, "with the understanding that you will

try and not baulk me in my hopes for your welfare, I have now to propose to you a little relaxation of a kind that you will fully appreciate."

"Yes, uncle."

"The grand tour, at least that is what they called an excursion to Italy, France, Germany, et cetera, when I was a boy. Tom Ernstone will be here to-morrow with his daughter Thérèse. You must not fall in love with her. She is promised to Sir Christopher Hallam. They are on their way to Tom's place from London, she to remain there for the winter, he to travel on the continent, partly for pleasure, partly for business. I have asked him to take you along with him. Does that meet your wishes?"

"You are too good to me, my dear Uncle and my dear friend," I answered.

"Not a bit of it," he said; "go into Bredon to-morrow and get whatever Ernstone says you may require, and pack your trunks to be ready at the end of the week—Good night! It is no good signing yourself

Ulysses unless you travel; and, by the way, it is out of character unless you marry, d'ye see?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Good night, Horace Durand, Esquire, Member of Parliament, vice Welby sent to the devil!"

"Good night, Uncle."

CHAPTER VII.

COLONEL ERNSTONE'S SECRET.

Colonel Tom Ernstone is well known in London Society. He is a retired Indian officer. He had a command during the mutiny, was wounded and decorated on the field. A cynical travelled man, I had already an experience of him which had not set me against so-called misanthropes. When I was fifteen he had been good enough to allow me to accompany him to Algiers, whither he went on a mission of some political importance. My uncle encouraged rather than suppressed my desire to see the world. A storm in the Bay of Biscay had, however, somewhat damped my ardour for a time, and my continual subjection to sea-

sickness might in a less ardent enthusiast have proved a perpetual bar to the exploration of foreign countries. I often wondered if Ulysses himself was sick. Nelson they say never overcame the nausea produced by ocean travel. Nor shall I, which convinces me, and I say it without vanity, that I am endowed with a fair amount of personal courage. To deliberately undertake an ocean voyage, knowing that you will suffer the tortures of death, without the relief of dying, is in my opinion an effort of the highest courage.

At seventeen I was not much of a companion for Colonel Ernstone though he had a habit of treating me as if I were a man. At twenty he talked to me and consulted me as freely as if I had been a veteran like himself. I saw his daughter for the first time on the occasion of her visit to "The Cedars." She was "sweet and twenty." A brunette with blue eyes, English in manner, but somewhat foreign in appearance. She might have sat for a

Norman maiden of the days of William, but for her eyes that were Saxon in their placid depths of blue. My uncle told me that the Colonel's aunt presided over his house.

"Tom has for years," said my uncle, "posed as a cynic. He is a kind fellow beneath that affectation. Thérèse knows it. So does his housekeeper. There is a romantic secret in Tom's early history. Nobody except one or two men who have known him intimately suspects it. At his London club he is looked upon as a man of the world, who accepts life as it is and makes the best of it; one who never lets anything interfere with his pleasures. Some of the fellows, I am told, think it great fun after dinner on winter evenings to sit over the fire and hear the gray-headed yet only middle-aged officer sneer at men and things and discount heroism. Only one of them, I know, has ever seen the inside of Tom's house, though they have all been his guests at club dinners, card parties, and billiards. You never know a man, Horace, until you have lived with him."

"Or been at sea with him, Uncle."

"True, that tries a man's temper. And Tom has a temper, mind you."

"I have never seen the rough side of it."

"Sir John Norwood, a man who was down here hunting with the Duke, did once. He ventured upon a questionable compliment, touching Tom's daughter, which nearly ended in Sir John's sudden and violent death on the hearth-rug of the Parthenon Club, and was the occasion of a hurried committee-meeting, at which Sir John saw fit to apologise for being nearly half strangled. Thérèse is never mentioned, I am told, at the Parthenon, or at White's, except by young Hallam, the Yorkshire baronet—your first of September friend. He is as madly in love, I hear, with Thérèse, as I wish you were with Helen Dunstan, though I confess that love is not necessarily a factor in marriage."

"Was Mrs. Ernstone English?" I asked, for I had never heard her spoken of, and Thérèse looked more "foreign" than myself.

"His wife was a youthful flame, quenched

by the birth of Thérèse. It was a love-match abroad; the girl was humble but respectable; that much I know of the story from Tom's own lips; she is buried in a Normandy churchyard; but she is not a subject to be talked of, for Tom's own private reasons. He tells me that Thérèse has a great wish to visit her mother's grave, and that he is continually trying to bring himself into a frame of mind to comply with her desire; but that whenever he does walk along the old churchyard to stand by the side of her tomb, with his daughter by his side, he shall realise something of what the martyrs felt who had to travel over red-hot plough-shares. It has gone hard with him, you see, this love as you call it. Let us have none of it, Horace! Helen Dunstan and an unruffled calm life of friendly intercourse, and a big balance at your banker's, eh?"

"Yes, uncle, certainly, in preference to love and red-hot plough-shares anyhow."

A few days before we went on our travels, Colonel Ernstone and I, we dined at War-

rington Manor. The party consisted of Helen, Thérèse, my uncle, the vicar, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Bredon (with all Peregrine Fox's clever articles he had not been able to return a Tory for that ancient borough), a curate and his mother, and one or two other local people. Susan Dobbs, in the stiffest of black silk dresses, sat near the curate and talked the stiffest of theology to him. I took Helen in to dinner, and we were rather dull, both of us, I don't know why. She looked remarkably handsome, and I wondered if on my return from "the grand tour," as my uncle called it, I should ask her to be my wife.

During the evening she sang (she had a rich contralto voice) Molloy's pathetic ballad "The Clang of the Wooden Shoon." As the story of the girl whose lover never came back from sea was told, I could not help noticing that Tom Ernstone pressed his daughter's hand almost convulsively. I was sitting near her and had been in communication with her and the Colonel up to the

very moment that Helen began to sing. I learnt afterwards that my uncle, as well as she and I, noticed the sad and pained expression on his face as the touching words fell in vocal tenderness from the lips of the singer.

> "But they are gone, a weary while, ah me!
> And he my own came home no more from sea.
> The sea looks black, the waves have all a moan,
> And I am left to sit and dream alone."

He looked up from the fire for a moment as this vocal wail of sadness, with its touching figure of the broken-hearted woman waiting for him who should never come back, filled the quiet atmosphere of the friendly room. I saw a tear trickle slowly down his cheek. He got up presently, thanked Miss Dunstan with an impresiveness that surprised her, and then turning to my uncle said he hoped he was ready to return to the Cedars.

"So soon?" asked Helen.

"Thérèse looks tired," said Ernstone, "and she has had a long day."

When, after a smart drive under the September stars, we reached home, there was

a cheerful light in the library. Tom Ernstone took his daughter in his arms, kissed her, and bade her good night. When the spirit bottles and pipes and cigars were laid on the table he said, "Horace, I want to have a private chat with your uncle before I go to bed, do you mind?"

"Not I, Colonel," I said.

"He may tell you all about it if he likes one day; it involves a lesson that may be useful to you," said the soldier.

"Oh thank you, Colonel, I should be sorry to trespass upon your confidence."

"There is no fellow whom I would rather have there than you, Horace, my boy," he said, taking my hand.

My uncle filled his pipe and looked at us with a grave face. Sandy came in and made the grog. I sipped a little to the health of our guest and went to bed.

It was a strange and sad story which Tom Ernstone told his old friend that night. My uncle did not make me acquainted with it for some time afterwards, but for the sake of

uniformity of narrative I propose to set forth the episode in this place, relegating the confession to the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MYSTERY OF THÉRÈSE ERNSTONE.

"Laying his hand affectionately on my shoulder," said my uncle, when afterwards narrating the incident to me in very eloquent detail,

"'Old fellow,'" he said, "'I have deceived you. I want to put myself right with you. I have not discouraged Sir Christopher Hallam's attentions to Thérèse, because I could see that the moment they met it was a mutual case of love at first sight. I wish her to marry the man she likes, whoever he is; and Hallam is a good match. But as an honourable man I must tell him some facts about Thérèse, which I have not even told you. Whatever comes of it he shall know. I will begin my penance with you, Dick."

"He took up the poker and stirred the fire, not that it required stirring, but as if he were arranging his thoughts; and he looked round at me as he laid his unlighted cigar upon the table.

"I have known army men who have seen him, at the head of his cavalry, ride straight up to an enemy's guns and ——. But that is not the question. To the world he is a hard-hearted cynic; but bitter epigram and an occasional sneer at sentiment represent the cloak which hides a tender heart and a lifelong regret.

"'That song! I saw you noticed my emotion,' he said, as he sat down again, looking into the fire. 'I have often felt that music has the power to lead one back to the past, and revive events that one tries to forget. Fate or Providence must have moved Miss Dunstan to sing that song to-night:—

"Oh! the clang of the wooden shoon;
Oh! the dance and the merry tune!
Happy sound of a bygone day,
It rings in my heart for aye!'

My God! I could see the dear suffering girl in her Normandy cap and sabots, sitting alone on that old wooden pier, waiting, waiting, with the sound of the merry tune turned to a dirge in her heart!'

"He swept his bony hand over his eyes and spoke as if he had forgotten me.

"'My dear friend,' he went on, after a pause, 'I want to confess. Let me show you the picture that song showed me, the picture which it still shows me in the fire. An old Normandy pier. A soft summer night. An English yacht moored at the jetty. A company of villagers regaled by Lord Templer, the owner; myself his companion. A fiddler pressed into the service. My partner as lovely a girl as the eyes of a villain ever rested on; an olive complexion, and the head of a Normandy aristocrat on the shoulders of a peasant; the strength of a fishwoman, with the grace of an Egyptian water-carrier. She was the most perfect type of Norman beauty that mind of man can imagine or brain of poet invent. I was

a young reckless fellow on a yachting cruise, putting in at that little fishing station for letters. My despatches came within twenty-four hours. I was ordered to join my troop in India at once. Lord Templer sailed the next day, leaving me to go on to Paris and London for outfit and other nccessaries. I did not go on to Paris that day nor the next; I stayed to make love to Julie. I called it making love. She thought it was love, poor little Normandy maiden! The next night there was a wedding in the village; a friend of Julie's was married to an Etretat fisherman. I went to the evening party. We danced until morning. The clang of the wooden shoon and the merry laughter of young and old came back to me last night like a blight as that song with its sad merriment took hold of my heart and memory. I stayed in the village for two weeks. It was a happy dream, but the dream of a fiend who had stolen into paradise. I promised to return. I never meant to do so. Her hot tears fell on my hand at parting.

I went to India. Don't you remember you used to ask what ailed me, why I had the blues, why I was often half mad, why I was reckless—why I was odd, and strange, and eccentric? Well it was Julie. I discovered that I loved her. She was in my mind always. I hated other women. I shunned intrigues that some of the fellows of Ours would have given anything to be in. I was in love. I wrote to her. No reply ever came. Perhaps she could not write. Perhaps her letters miscarried; for we were worried about from post to post, as you know. Her face, her black eyes, her pouting lips, her wooden shoes—by the Lord, from head to foot the pretty little woman sank deep into my heart! She was the one creature in all the world of whom I was continually thinking; always with a vow to go back to her, and to do her the justice that my selfish love had only prompted when I was far away from her.'

"He paused, rose from his chair, and walked about the room. I encouraged him with some friendly words.

"'Five years had gone when I stood once more on the Normandy jetty. The sleepy old fishing-smacks were there, the peasant women in their wooden shoes, the sailors and fishermen, the flapping sails, the sea creeping lazily along the coast. Where was Julie? Our hot work and my bruised heart had changed me out of knowledge. I looked for Julie. I inquired for Julie. People shook their heads. At last an old woman, as she sat knitting in the sun, told me how five years ago a yacht had anchored there; how the noble English had generously treated the village; how the brutal English had ruined Julie Perreyve, the prettiest girl on all the coast; how she had trusted the English honour, how she had waited for Milord's return, how she had sat on the jetty's edge looking out to sea, how at every village dance and festival she had sat a silent spectator, how she had faded out—how she had died!'"

"My old friend's voice trembled with emotion, but he poked the fire again; and

looking into the smouldering embers he went on with the story that had burnt its memory into his heart.

"'No Indian bullet could have hit me so hard and so cruelly as that story of Julie's sorrow and death. I did not speak for some time. Then I put money into the old woman's hand. 'Take me to the place in which they have buried her,' I said. I looked down upon the poor little green mound and the wooden cross. It seemed as if my heart split in two.'"

"'God help you, my poor dear friend!' I said, and took his hand in mine.

"'You may well say so,' he answered, 'you may well. But there is a streak of light in the tragedy. I went back to the old dame's cottage. I sat down to talk to her of Julie. I wanted to learn everything about her. It was now a welcome penance to hear of her devotion, her sorrow, her martyrdom. A clatter of wooden shoes rattled across the floor of the adjoining room. Then a childish voice called out, '*Grand'mère.*'

The next moment a fairy in wooden shoes came bounding in, an infant rising five. The old woman took her up and kissed her. 'This is her child,' she said, turning to me. 'Whose?' I asked with a joyous fearlessness. 'Julie's,' she said. 'We call her Thérèse, the little English lady.' '*My* child!' I said, trembling like a woman, '*my* child!' and even that hard Normandy grandmother pitied me when she guessed how much I had suffered."

"He sighed, and then facing me said—

"'That is the bar sinister on the escutcheon of Thérèse Ernstone. I am going to confess the blot to Christopher Hallam. What will he say? What will he do?'

"'Admire and love you, as I do, for your big heart, your manliness, and your honour,' I said.

"'Ah, I don't know about the honour, my friend, but repentance and the desire and intention to atone for a wrong are good. Hallam must make me a solemn promise that whatever happens he will never let

Thérèse know what I shall tell him. He has no father nor mother to consult. He is master of himself. What will he do?'"

The question must be left for Sir Christopher Hallam's reply, which will present itself, in due course, for future consideration.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

Farewell! if ever fondest prayer
For other's weal availed on high,
Mine will not all be lost in air,
But waft thy name beyond the sky.
'Twere vain to speak, to weep, to sigh:
Oh! more than tears of blood can tell,
When wrung from guilt's expiring eye,
Are in the word—Farewell! Farewell!

These lips are mute, these eyes are dry;
But in my heart and in my brain
Awake the pangs that pass not by,
The thought that ne'er shall sleep again.
My soul nor deigns nor dares complain,
Though grief and passion there rebel:
I only know we loved in vain—
I only feel—Farewell! Farewell!—

LORD BYRON.

CHAPTER I.

CALYPSO'S ISLAND.

By the light of the revelation of Colonel Ernstone's secret, I afterwards read his treatment of me on the occasion of a confession which I made to him. The reader of these reminiscences will have an advantage over me, in this respect, at the moment of the occurrences I am about to relate.

We had lounged through Italy, and had rested at the village of Baveno, where Ernstone had left me to visit Sir Christopher Hallam at Milan on a matter of business, with an arrangement between us that he would return within a fortnight. He had hardly left me when I made a delightful discovery near the dream-like shores of Lago Maggiore.

To see her was to love her. I fell before her first glance.

"Who is she?" I asked an Italian peasant.

"Ah! the beautiful stranger!" he said, looking towards the villa that lay at a distance from the road amidst the clustering woods.

Nobody knew her. She had bought the villa, and had lived there for several months without a visitor. Had she servants? Oh, yes, and an old lady sometimes assisted Father Gabriello to distribute alms for her among the poor. What country was she? French, perhaps. They could not say. German, possibly, or English? She spoke Italian with a foreign accent. Her complexion was fair and her hair a golden-brown. There were pictures of the Madonna not unlike her in Italian churches. Perhaps she was a Venetian. They could not tell. It was not probable she was English, and she was too beautifully fair to be French.

I had twice met her in byways leading

from the lake. She was sitting by the side of an old woman. They were in a carriage drawn by a pair of horses and driven by a French coachman. I stood to gaze after her, not out of impertinent curiosity, but transfixed with an admiration that overpowered me. I realised something of the sensations of Ulysses bound to the mast in presence of the Syrens. My soul was on fire. I think at that moment I would have sold it to the fiend, as Faust did at the sight of Marguerite.

One day she turned her head to look at me. I could not be mistaken. Not only to look at me, but to smile upon me. I followed her carriage on foot, keeping it in view for some time. I think she ordered the coachman to drive slowly. Presently, however, she disappeared. The surrounding forest closed in upon her. She was gone. In the distance the villa, where I understood she lived, caught the last rays of the sun on traceried tower and window. A brook came bounding out of the grounds. It sang praises of her beauty in response to my own

ecstacy. Then it wound round in a gentle curve and turned again as if to encompass the park-like forest that shut her from me. I lay upon its banks, I walked among the boulders in its bed, I followed its course like a man enchanted.

The next day I returned to the point where I left it, and continued winding along the track of it, and hoping that I might meet the syren of the grove which it watered. The little estate in which the villa stood was an island; and when, immediately on this discovery, my mind went rambling back to Ulysses, I rebuked the thought that entitled it Calypso's Island.

This goddess of the villa was a Diana rather than a Calypso; but, whatever she might be, I was her slave. Ah, if the lady of Warrington Manor had only inspired me with such mad passion as this! Then, instead of emulating the heroic lovers in old Burton's chronicles, might I not have fulfilled the ambition of the master of the Cedars, and lived in uninterrupted felicity and increasing hap-

piness, like "Seneca with his Paulina, Orpheus with Eurydice, Arria with Pætus, Artemnisa with Mausoleus, and Rubenius Celea with his lovely Ennea."

My passion for this beautiful stranger, to whom I had not even spoken, burned with all the sudden fury and persistent flame that, according to Burton, belongs to "love melancholy." And yet, under the test of the noblest aspirations of true love, it did not, as Burton depicts the passion, sacrifice on "the altar of the implacable deity" either the fear of God or man, nor outrage "all laws human and divine;" but, "like the forked lightning of the angry gods," it laid waste for years a career and a disposition, where the beneficent hand of time is only now beginning to cultivate the buds and blossoms of a new ambition.

I did meet her, and by that very stream, and I spoke to her, and she to me, her voice softening as she did so, as voices soften in conversation with those they love. She had seen me somewhere before, she said. No, she was not mistaken. I knew that I had

only seen her now for the first time. Why was I so positive? Because I had only lived since I had seen her. Her eyes fell, shadowing her cheek with long drooping lashes. She was not displeased. I could see the corners of her mouth dimple with satisfaction. Nothing would have restrained me, not even her scorn. I seized her hand. She did not withdraw it. I covered it with kisses. I was mad. I told her that I loved her. If she were to call her people and have me put upon the rack, I told her I should say the same. She pressed my hand, and looked into my eyes. One only feels the hot mad delight of passion once. But it is something gained in life to recall it, whatever its associations may be.

She was a dream of loveliness. Her hand was made to give her soul away, so soft and tender was it, so lingering in its touch. Her eyes were steadfast too. They were a blue-grey, of liquid depth, and when they rested on mine I had no thoughts that were not wholly hers. Tall and graceful, she had the bust of a Clytie and the head of a Ceres,

"rich-haired." A thin grey merino with a broad pink sash about her waist, she carried a great sunshade lined with a sea-shell pink silk and covered with old point lace. When she smiled her face was illuminated with a genial warmth. She was one of those lovely creations that pervade their surrounding atmospheres, like the orchids in the tree-tops of a lowland forest near the equator, the rhododendrons of American woods, or the lilies of an English valley. You felt her presence even if you saw her not. Her loveliness made a halo for itself. She appeared to me to be the centre of every spot upon which her beauty shone, completing a picture Nature might have left unfinished that she should adorn it. The personification of grace and symmetry, she was to me the type of all that is pure, virtuous, and magnanimous. In my fancy she was worthy of the praises which Ossian lavished upon Darthula. Her beauty was, indeed, entrancing beyond that of Erin's maid, reflecting as it did the sunny warmth of a loving nature. Clothed

with the purity of the last of Colla's race, she was to me not less fascinating than the more classic goddess of a better-known mythology, the celestial nymph "with every beauty crowned."

Need I say more to make the reader understand that I was madly in love, and that the woman of my adoration was "beautiful beyond compare?" I was utterly unsophisticated in the seductiveness of the mad passion. No reason had hitherto presented itself in my life to exercise the caution that Southey urges upon youth, how they advance into the dangerous world. Only our duty can, he says, conduct us safely. "Our passions are seducers; but of all the strongest Love." There was no ordinary passion either in the poetic or in the physical sense in my love; it was an uncontrolled and uncontrollable desire to sit at the feet of this goddess of the Italian woods, to be near her, to hear her speak, to have no other ambition than her sweet companionship.

Looking back upon this youthful dream,

this, on my part, emulative blissfulness of the early days of Celadon and his Amelia, I recall the pathetic glances that now and then fell from the great eloquent eyes of my first love; I recall the furtive sigh, the tender regretful eloquence of wayward words, which in those past days had no meaning for me except as belonging to a generous loving kindness conferred upon me. It never entered my arrogant thoughts that any other mortal had been blessed with her eloquent speech, her sympathetic glances. For me the world had just begun, and the vanity of this first fair encounter swept my thoughts clear of yesterdays.

On that next day, to which I just now referred, she motioned me to a seat beside her, a rustic couch covered with dainty draperies, on the margin of the villa's garden, and close by the rivulet which encircled the foliated domain.

"Sit," she said, "and let us talk."

Her hand rested accidentally near mine. Overcome with my boyish emotions,

and nerved by a strange courage, I seized it, and confessed the love with which she had inspired me.

"But you have only seen me for the first time within the week," she answered.

"I loved you at first sight," I said.

"Truly," she answered, "and have you not made the same confession to half a hundred women before?"

The coolness of the retort chilled me for a moment; but before I could reply she amended her answer.

"Your words are sincere, I do quite believe," she said. "You have not seen the world."

"Indeed I have," I answered, "and I know there is no woman in it so lovely, so kind as you."

She allowed her hand to remain in mine. It was a soft, plump, white hand.

"You are an Englishman?" she asked, turning her face towards me.

It was a circular seat upon which we sat, so that, although we were side by side, we

almost faced each other, and I could note the expression of her eyes, and the gentle parting of her lips.

"Yes," I said, "that is, I am English born, but my father, heaven rest him, was of French descent."

"And I am your first love? Was there no girl-love in your very youthful days?"

"None," I said, pressing her hand.

"No tiny thing in short frocks that you remember to-day with pleasure or regret?"

"My boyish days belong to the world of regrets," I answered.

"You have had sorrows, then?"

"Yes."

So long as her soft hand lay in mine I was content to sit and answer her questions in a vague impassive way; though my vanity was flattered by the interest she evinced in me.

"Great sorrows? You had a father and mother who loved you?"

"A father and mother? Yes. My mother would have loved me, had she dared. My father loved me, and died."

"As dies all human love," she said.

"We will make an exception to that sorrowful rule," I said, "if you shall deign to give your love to me."

The ardency of this first inspiration of passion made me bold, and my courage was stimulated by the continued possession of her hand.

"The world is full of deceit and sadness," she said.

"We will make a world of our own, dedicated to love," I said.

"You talk as if the repartee of professed courtship were easy to you," she said; and before I could respond to this reflection on my sincerity (for I never dreamed of taking it as a confession of experience) she took up the thread of her previous reference to my early life.

"In what part of the great world did you spend your youth?"

"At Scarsdale, in Derbyshire."

"Derbyshire! Ah, yes. A very picturesque county, is it not?"

"Very."

"And Scarsdale?"

"I do not like it."

"Why?"

"Chiefly because it is associated in my memory with sad events, a somewhat melancholy childhood, and a funeral that well-nigh broke my heart."

"Your father's?"

"Yes."

"But your mother lives?"

"Yes; though I have never seen her since I left Scarsdale for ever."

She waited for me to continue.

"I like to hear you talk of your boyhood," she said. "Why did you leave Scarsdale? And why for ever?"

"I was unhappy. My mother married again. Her husband hated me and I him. He poisoned my mother's mind against me."

"But before that time," she said, "when your father lived, were you not happy then?"

"Oh yes, I think so."

"You had companions?"

"No."

"Not some village girl, some little neighbour, the memory of whose voice goes with you through life, a something that might be part of a dream, not all sadness?"

I hesitated. Connie Gardner occurred to me; but the conceit of my love for this splendid woman checked me. Love may be that overwhelming passion the poets claim, but it is diplomatic in spite of all. The desire to impress the object of your affections is so prominent a factor in your intercourse with her, that you are always sufficiently self-conscious to make the best of yourself. Your position, your antecedents, your prospects, your family and connections. Instinct, under the guidance of this human vanity, checked my mention of a mere waif and stray of Scarsdale, whose touching "Good-bye!" came back to me with pathetic force under the pressure of Calypso-Darthula's inquiries.

"I had no girl companions," I said, fenc-

ing with the question, "nor any boy friends for that matter. My childhood was lonely. My father being French in speech and manner was made a reproach to me by the ignorant youth of Scarsdale. I remember even now, with bitterness, the persecutions which I endured at the hands of one boy-monster named Barnes, who harassed me continually. The very elegancies of the home-life of my father's house offended both young and old. He was a musician and an artist; I suspect the only bit of pure art atmosphere to be found in Scarsdale was at Oakfield House, where I lived."

"An oasis in a desert of ignorance," she said, "and you have cherished these memories?"

"Yes."

"Are you an artist, then?"

"Not by profession."

"An amateur?"

"I have some knowledge of music."

"You sing?"

"A little."

"You are an instrumentalist?"

"I know enough to regret that I know so little."

"You left Scarsdale to go to College, no doubt?"

"No, to live with my uncle."

"And you are travelling for your pleasure?"

"For pleasure and experience; my last excursion prior to settling down in London to study for the Bar—at least so it is arranged."

"You know London, then?"

"No."

"You have been there often?"

"Only a few times, but always *en route* to the continent."

"You have not lived in town—not even spent a season there?"

"No; my uncle has strange views about London; a city for men, not for boys, he always says. He did not exactly forbid me staying in London, but he talked against

it; and, as he gave me opportunities to visit all the world besides, I should have been ungrateful to disobey him."

"Then you know Paris, Milan, Vienna, Berlin, perhaps?"

"Yes; and nearly all the other great European capitals, and some of the Asiatic cities also."

"A great traveller, and so young?" she said.

"Not so very young," I said, that diplomatic instinct before mentioned coming to my aid; for the possibility of an inequality in our ages occurred to me as a possible impediment in regard to her answer, when I should ask her to be my partner in those sweet bonds of matrimony that should make her mine and me hers for ever.

It did not occur to me that for less selfish purposes in the days of my boyhood I had challenged Connie Gardner's age and she mine; for, as I said before, I strove rather to shut out these memories than to encourage them in presence of this splendid creature,

who had already condescended so much in her notice of me that I dared not challenge the sincerity of her interest in me by the exhibition of any latent feeling for so insignificant a person as the runaway grandchild of Laudanum Nanny.

"And since those days of Scarsdale you have found the world a merry place?" she said.

"I never dreamed there could be so much happiness in it until now."

"Paris is as good a tutor, I fancy, in the small change of so-called love-making as London," she said, withdrawing her hand from mine and rising to her feet.

"You do not doubt the sincerity of my love!" I exclaimed, and my heart seemed to stop with a sudden anxiety.

"I have lived in London," she said, "and in Paris also, and I know the ring of the coin which passes current for the true lover's gold."

As she spoke she beckoned to the old woman in the distance. The wrinkled but

stately dame came towards us. I felt for a moment as if a great disaster had befallen me.

"Madame Fridoline," she said.

"Madame," responded the ancient dame.

"Mr. Horace Durand will call at the villa to-morrow, and it is my pleasure that you announce him to me the moment he arrives."

The dame curtseyed, Madame held out her hand, I kissed it respectfully; and the next moment I was alone with my reflections and the music of the bubbling brook, now somewhat out of tune, yet quite in harmony with the agitation of my mind.

CHAPTER II.

OUTSIDE THE GROTTO, AND ADVISED NOT TO ENTER THERE.

"How did she know my name?" I asked myself twenty times as I retraced my steps to the little inn, where I remained to await Colonel Ernstone's return. I do not remember to have mentioned it; she might have learnt it at the inn; but of course she would not have taken the trouble to inquire, and yet she spoke it as familiarly as if she had known it always! "And why did her pleasant manner change so abruptly?"

"Who is the lady that lives at the villa?" I asked of the landlord at the inn, who sat

smoking beneath his vine and fig-tree in the sun.

He did not know.

"She is English, eh?"

"The English are a great nation," he said.

"Will you find out for me, perhaps at the post-office, her name and quality."

"Eh, Dio!" he said, "the Signora of the villa would have me shot for such inquisitiveness."

"Has she given orders," I asked, "for the maintenance of an incognito, then?"

Madame had given no orders, he answered, but she was kindness itself. Her money alleviated the need of all the district. She was a saint in disguise. When first she came there she was sick. Father Gabriello (at whose name he bowed and crossed himself) had given her religious consolation. Since then his Church of the Visitation had been adorned in many ways by the gifts of the good Signora. He pointed to a tiny church, nestling on the hill-side, as he spoke.

It was not necessary that he should confirm my opinion of her goodness. But why was she surrounded with mystery?

While I was talking with the cautious master of the inn, the priest, Father Gabriello himself, came up to eat his daily fare of soup, birds, and maccaroni, to drink his bottle of wine, and smoke his cigarette.

I responded to his genial salutation and begged to be allowed to sit at table with him in the common room of the inn.

Though I despised myself for trying to penetrate what she evidently desired to keep a secret, I could not help talking of the beautiful lady of the villa. When Father Gabriello's courtly manners towards me had mellowed still more under the effect of the rich white wine, which had been forthcoming under special pressure (a concession to influence and money combined) I opened the ball.

"You know Madame, the lady of the villa yonder?" I said, indicating with a nod the direction of the house in the woods.

"She has honoured me much," he answered.

"An English lady?" I remarked.

"The Church is universal; it has no nationality. Are you one of her sons?"

"I am a Protestant," I said.

"It is a great world," responded the priest.

"Permit me to say that I have a sincere respect for the more ancient Church, and that I admire the devotion of its priesthood."

Father Gabriello bowed.

"You are English?" he said. "I entertain the highest sentiments of admiration for your nation. I have lived in England."

"Indeed! I might have guessed it by the way in which you speak the language."

"You are complimentary. I held a curé in an English city for many years."

"May I ask what city?"

"Worcester, the last to stand out against the arch-fiend Cromwell."

"You surprise me!"

"Why?"

"Because my home is in that county, not more than a score of miles from the faithful city, as they love to call it."

"Ah, Dio mio!" he exclaimed, "it is not a great world, it is a small one."

"How long is it since you left Worcester?"

"Five years."

"Then perhaps you may have met my uncle, Mr. Richard Grantley?"

"Of The Cedars, near Breedon?" he asked, "Dick Grantley?"

"The same," I said.

"Oh yes; I met him at Lord Danmere's at dinner, twice; Lord Danmere, you know, is a great Tory and a strict Catholic. Your uncle, if I remember rightly, is the one and not the other."

"True true," I said; "but a noble, upright, true, honourable gentleman!"

"No doubt, no doubt; I have heard Lord Danmere say so."

"Father Gabriello, it gives me more

pleasure than I can put into words to meet you!" I said.

"Since you have learnt that I know your uncle?" he replied, with a merry twinkle in his dark brown eyes.

"Oh, yes, and for your own sake too," I said, quickly. "I drink to your health," I said; "to our better acquaintance, and I hope to our ultimate friendship!"

"It is well said, sir; I gladly respond, and beg that we may pledge the name of Squire Grantley in a mutual toast."

We clanked our glasses together and drank to the dear old gentleman, whose generosity enabled me to do this honour, in a foreign country, to his name and reputation.

"And now since we know each other so well," I said, "will you pardon me for saying that if I were of the same faith as Lord Danmere I should just now be not only anxious to confess to you, but to seek your advice."

"You may do so without being received

into the Church, and probably in your present case you may perhaps obtain worldly advice suitable to your condition."

"I do not understand," I said.

"I saw you to-day sitting by the side of our beautiful guest of Baveno, the Lady of the villa."

"Then you have divined half of what I would confess."

"You do not ask how I saw you and why I did not present myself to the Signora, though the Villa Verona is open house to me. I am Madame's almoner and I am also her confessor."

"I love her!" I exclaimed, rising from the table and pacing the room.

"She is a lovable woman."

"I would marry her."

"I hope you will not."

"Why?"

"She has resolved to live in Italy; you would take her to England."

"I would live wherever she desired."

"She is devoted to the Church; you

would control her disposition. She is rich; the Church is poor; you would not endow our charities with her money. You see I am frank."

"I would not touch her money; she should do whatever she pleased with it."

"How then would you live; you have no money?"

"I have a little, I should earn more."

"How?"

"By my profession."

"What profession?"

"The law."

"Have you studied the law?"

"Not yet. I could obtain an opening in journalism and authorship."

"You talk wildly and without thought. What would your uncle say to your marrying out of your faith?"

"He would not object."

"I think he would, and you owe it to him to ask his permission."

"I would ask it."

"If he refused?"

"It would kill me."

"What if she refused?"

"Judge for yourself; all my hopes in life would be gone. I am talking wildly, I admit, madly if you like; but I am sincere in all I say, and I have courage enough to face every possible difficulty that an unkind fate could lay in my path, fortified with her encouragement and companionship."

"A young man should marry in his own circle; he should take a wife from among his own people, one whom he knows, whose home life he has seen, whose family is familiar with his own. You seek my advice. Leave Baveno at once. Travel far and quickly, and believe that I advise you for your good."

He laid his hand upon my shoulder in a fatherly way as he spoke.

"A stranger whom you have only known for a few days, a lady who is at least ten years your senior, you cannot afford to give

up the ambition of a life just commencing for the satisfaction of such a sudden fancy—perhaps worse, mere transient passion."

"She has invited me to call to-morrow," I said, mentally staggering under the priest's advice.

"It is to tell you, though in more gentle language, what I tell you now, I feel assured; save her the pain of it, and show, that in asking for good advice you know how to appreciate it."

"Show a starving man an orchard of ripe autumn fruit, and tell him it is best he should not touch it," I said, impatiently.

"He refuses," responded the priest, "and lives to discover the dead-sea apple that turns to ashes on the lips."

"Pardon me," I said, making a great effort to control myself, "we will talk no more of this; I thank you very much for advice that is no doubt well meant."

"It is hard to bear; whether you act upon it or not, pray count me among your friends, and remember that he is not always

the best doctor who leaves the wound unprobed, and whose remedies are pleasantest to the taste."

How long the night was, how slow the weary hours, that lay between the time when I might once more see the woman who had entranced me! The sun had set, and the moon had risen before Father Gabriello and I parted. The last glories of the sun were reflected in the adjacent lake, visible from the window of my little sitting-room. A cool breeze, laden with delicious aromatic scents, stirred the palms that half filled the shaded balcony. Distant bells chimed the "Ave Maria." The musical plash of oars gave life to the stillness below me. And I thought of Calypso's island, turning hot and cold as I did so; for it seemed as if the scene before me half realised the celestial land of the Odyssey.

> Without the grot a various sylvan scene
> Appear'd around, and groves of living green;
> Poplars and elders ever quivering play'd,
> And nodding cypress form'd a fragrant shade.

* * * *

Four limpid fountains from the clefts distil ;
And every fountain pours a several rill,
In mazy windings wandering down the hill ;
Where bloomy meads with vivid greens are crown'd,
And glowing violets throw their odour round.

I encouraged my heated imagination into a half crazy hope that I was indeed about to repeat one of the Ulyssean adventures, and I flattered myself, that, should the lady in this case desire to keep me captive, there was no Jove who could command my release. It might have been different had not the muddy Mercury, who brought to the Breedon valley the news of the fall of Sedan, not so rudely interrupted a conversation that was gradually leading up to a serious proposal and a pledge ! But for the battle of Sedan, I should have left Breedon engaged to Helen Dunstan, and then it would have been my duty to have resisted the goddess of the Villa Verona ; and, had she proved as self-sacrificing as Calypso herself, I trust I should have remained more faithful to my vows than Ulysses was, as touching his adored Penelope.

Heaven forgive me for writing in this

strain of the woman whom I loved so well! It arises out of no callousness, believe me, but is the natural outcome of the inevitable comparison between myself and the great Ulysses, forced upon me by circumstances over which I have no control. Dubbed Ulysses derisively, and also in token of affection, it has become a habit with me to see comparisons and contrasts that have relationship between my real prosaic career and the imaginary narrative that sets forth the adventures of the poetic hero. I protest to the reader that no special vanity of mine underlies these references to my own adventures nor in my association of them with those of the great pagan ideal. "A modern Ulysses" is a nickname as well as a term of endearment; it represents the scoff of Welby, as well as the affection that belongs to a pet name; and it keeps green the memory of the dear old gentleman who was reading the story of Ulysses to the boy in the velvet frock in the first chapter of this veritable but ill-constructed history, this

salmagundi of autobiographic notes, which relies for its taste and flavour upon facts that are flung together without the sophistication of literary artifice or design.

I sat at my bedroom window far into the night, in a half-dazed meditative condition of mind, not thinking of anything in particular and yet about everything; I sat as a culprit might, awaiting his sentence, with the feeling that to-morrow is weighted with his destiny, that when the sun shines once again he will learn whether his sentence is to be death or liberty.

As the moon mounted higher in the heavens, and tree and hill below threw about them deeper shadows, I surveyed my life in a dreamy inconsequent fashion, and found in all my hopes but one goal, the love of this unknown woman. I had not yet crossed those hills of my infancy and exploited the mystery of their wonderful palace; but here in the land of song and romance I found myself face to face with the mystery that is next to the mystery of death—love. For my uncle's

sake I could not help a passing regret that the divine passion had not been kindled by the woman he would have chosen for me. What bliss had this lady of the Italian villa been old Dunstan's daughter!

I suppose I entertained myself with these thoughts and fancies chiefly that I might get through the night without actually going mad; for Father Gabriello had poisoned my imagination with strange doubts and fears; he had given increased significance of ill omen to my lady's last words. I recalled her sudden change of manner and the cynicisim of her reference to the current coin of flattery or so-called courtship; and it required my acutest remembrances of her tender looks and the pressure of her soft hand to dissipate the augury of misery I found in that transition from sunshine to shadow, the latter deepened and made terrible by the advice sought and obtained from my reverend friend of the inn.

I fell asleep at last and dreamed that the Villa Verona was Calypso's grotto, the scent

of the surrounding woods the cedar and frankincense of the cavern's odorous breath, which already greeted me as I thrust aside the deepening vines that screened the magic portals.

CHAPTER III.

INSIDE THE GROTTO.

I have seen the day break in many lands, in the tropics and amidst fields of ice off Labrador, in the New World, and in the Old; at sea and on the mountain tops; in peace and in war; on Mont Blanc and on Primrose Hill; in the Malay Archapelago and camping out luxuriously on the Upper Thames. But one sunset and one sunrise live in my recollection for ever. The golden west and the crimson east; the pale moon in a yellow aerial sea; the first red beams of the risen god; shall I ever forget those mysterious lights and shadows and adornments of natural objects that belong to my

night and day in the Calypso's island of my earliest travels ?

When I started for the Villa Verona the world was in full possession of the sun. Still it was very early. The people of the inn were only just awake. White pigeons were calling to each other. The dew glistened on tree and flower, and dripped from the eaves of house and barn. The bells at Father Gabriello's church were sounding for some holy office, an early mass perhaps. I tried to think wisely of my situation, imported into my intellectual reconnaisance thoughts of my uncle and of Helen Dunstan, and made an effort to imagine myself a real Ulysses under an enchantment which it was my duty to shake off. It was of no avail. I had never seen the world look so lovely, so fresh, never known it smell so sweet as on this morning. After a hurried bath and a scanty meal I set off for the grotto, the strange villa, the enchanted house, the cave of Darthula-Calypso. The rivulet met me with a joyous

song, the birds flew before me, peasants saluted me, the world was alive and full of hope and promise.

Presently the world became silent and I was alone. I had entered the magic portals of my goddess's domain, the garden-like woods in which the woman who had enthralled me had control and command.

It was an old Italian villa, seared with age, beautiful in decay. I stood in front of it. No sign of life. The terrace walls were adorned with quaint broken sculpture. Trailing creepers and flowers made picturesque efforts to hide the ravages of time.

The spirit of the great ages past seemed to brood over the spot. A trickling fountain murmured among a bed of clustering roses. It was silence emphasised by sound. I flung myself down under the shade of a spreading palm.

Under the impressive influence of the scene contrasts between it and the environs of Calypso's cavern stirred my inner consciousness, presenting themselves to my

imagination without effort. I thought of nothing. My mind was passive. I was in a new world. I let my thoughts drift as they listed. No sensual, nor even sensuous, suggestion shadowed this spot, sacred by the lapse of time, dedicated to the sublimity of a pure and noble art. The ever-new delights of Calypso's island were not here, nor did the violets recall the simile of blue veins enamelling the smooth breasts of fragrant meads. Such inspiration as might be found, in the grove that clipped the grotto of my love round about, was chaste and dealt with the higher life, its silent voices freighted with memories of a past, the relics of which have a tender pathos and the reflected light of which is the halo of modern art.

As the shadow on the dial that spread itself to the sun on a mouldering shaft (whence the fountain trickled among the waking roses still wet with dew) travelled slowly along its ancient course I roused myself to chide the unworthy thoughts that

had more than once afflicted my fancy, in regard to the living soul that was the centre of this classic spot. Just as my heart had offered up a stinging protest to my brain, vowing the lady to be all that is fair and good and true and pure, the villa gave such living tokens of life as Wertz must once have seen before he painted that dream of female beauty which is entitled *Le Bouton Rose.*

A lattice was flung open. A woman looked out upon the garden, a fair hand drawing a white robe about her bosom. You know the picture in the Brussels Gallery, the figure at the open lattice which redeems the surrounding horrors? Then picture the sight that riveted my rapturous gaze!

And our eyes met almost at the same moment. The surprise and delight were surely mutual. Her glance was a message of love; and only a message, a lightning flash; for she withdrew on the instant; but she left her picture on the retina of my soul. Had I the painter's art I could limn it now,

though the memory of it is somewhat dimmed by a more saint-like presentment of the same lovely face. Other pictures in Life's kaleidoscope have also claimed places in my memory, other voices have also touched my heart.

I look back to the earlier time however. Presently the carved doors of the villa are opened. I am beckoned by a servant, the major-domo of my princess's retainers, the chief of the Darthula-Colypso bodyguard. I enter the marble halls. Fruit and wine, milk and honey, are placed before me. The room is open to a terrace that gives upon a garden of sweet flowers shut in by overhanging trees, that shade it from the burning sun. Here there is again the quiet music of trickling fountains. Examined in detail the room is no doubt rich in art treasures; but the general effect is repose, rest, quiet. The atmosphere of it lulls the senses. Time passes here, as it were, without leaving a wrinkle, without disturbing a tone of colour, moving onwards as it does over the dial-

plate; and yet you feel and know that Time has lingered day after day in that outer garden for centuries, and that the silent god has heard in this room from their own lips the songs of poets whose memories are enshrined in their works, but whose bodies have returned to the dust from whence they sprang.

After a little while I hear the trailing garments of my love sweep the mosaic floors. She stands by my side, a vision of mature beauty, a model of artistic pose and grace.

"Your constancy touches me," she says, with a smile, "for I was cruel to you in those last words."

"You could not be cruel to any one, much less to a worshipper," I answer.

"Have you spent the night in my garden — surely not?"

"No, I cannot claim to have been so happy; I came here soon after sunrise."

"And you think the gardens pretty?"

"I have never seen anything more beautiful."

"Not the gardens and meadows of your

native place — the Arcadia you told me of?"

"No, nothing."

"Ah! I fear it is I who have enthralled your critical faculties, and blunted your sense of comparison. Love conquers reason. I believe *I* was once in love."

She paused and looked at me. I did not reply.

"You do not like to hear that confession. Men are selfish. They are vain, too, since every individual one of them thinks he possesses the one particular attraction that is to rivet the attention of one particular woman."

"Men are what women make them," I said.

"No, no! you reverse the proverb."

She was sitting on a low seat in the shadow of a sunblind by the open terrace-window; her dress, a pale soft blue Indian silk. At the end of her short speeches she fanned herself very quietly with a fan of a similar material to her dress, but painted in delicate water-colours, with designs of birds, and leaves, and flowers.

"I wish I might be so blessed of fortune as to reverse it then in your case," I said, with a boldness that came of a great effort to resist a tendency to stammer like a boy, instead of laying siege to the goddess of my idolatry like a man.

And all at once I thought of Verona and Juliet, of the old romance, and encouraged myself to speak what my heart dictated.

"There was a time when you might have done so," she said.

"Let the time that is lost go," I answered, "it is without recall; those lovers in the story, which might have been inaugurated in this very palace, looked forward into the future; and they were model lovers for all ages."

"Do you think so?" she answered, and I remember now the touch of critical doubtfulness there was in the tone of her voice, though then I only heard its music. "You have been to Verona?"

"And walked in the footsteps of the Capulets and the Montagues," I answered,

"but never felt the depth of the poet's tale until I knew the Villa Verona, two hours ago."

"Let us walk upon the terrace," she said.

As we moved out into the air a flock of white doves sailed down almost at her feet, alighting on the balustrades. She returned to the table, where dainty fare had been placed for me, and fed them with crumbs. The music of a harp rippled out upon the sunny air from a distant wing of the villa.

"You like music?" she asked, as she led the way to a shaded corner of the garden, a bower set into a crumbling wall, half hidden with trailing vines and floral creepers.

"I am human," I said.

"These chords might be the creation of angelic fingers," she said, pointing to a chair, and at the same time taking an adjacent seat.

I paused, for it was evident she wished to say something of the harpist.

"Old Fridoline is a perfect mistress of that most delightful of instruments. She is not too pleasant to look upon, but she is devotion itself."

"The old lady who accompanies you when you drive?"

"The same," she said, "you do not like her."

"I like anything you like, and am prepared to do homage even to Madame Fridoline," I replied.

"She is wrinked and old, but age has softened not hardened her heart. She has been a mother to me, though in some things she has not always been true to my interests. She has an infirmity, a desire to amass money. Why she is miserly is her own secret. She has had a strange career. Once she held a high position in French society, though when a girl she wandered from town to town with her father, street musicians. A composer, and an executant of the highest merit, she is clever and learned, and accomplished in many ways. Poor old Frido-

line! I do not know what I should do without her.

"Do you play upon any instrument?

"Very imperfectly upon the violoncello, in memory, I think, of my father."

"He played?"

"Yes, *en amateur*."

"When you were a boy at Scarsdale?"

"Yes."

"Let us talk of those happy days."

"Since it pleases you, yes," I said, "but they were not happy days always; may we not talk of yours?"

"Oh yes," she answered, "we have time enough, and to spare; when do you leave Baveno?"

"When you order me to go."

"Do you always obey orders?"

"When they are orders that should be obeyed."

"You did when a boy?"

"Sometimes. But let us talk of you when you were a girl."

"Be content," she said, and she looked at me, with an earnestness that I had noticed, once before, when she was listening to my first passionate avowals.

"I am if only I could know that you loved me."

She moved as if to interrupt me.

"Let me speak, for my words are the inspiration of that look you gave me; nay let me speak," I said.

I took her hand and gazed into her face, and her lips trembled.

"Do not tell me I have only this moment seen you. Do not tell me I know nothing of you. We are in the land of Romeo and Juliet. He had loved before, and at the height of his passion for Rosaline he saw and loved Juliet. He had only that moment seen her; she was the daughter of his bitterest foe; and she gave him love for love, though she knew him to be the enemy of her house. No such barriers separate us; if there be any others that I know not of bid me leap them, and I am

on the other side before you can command me."

I covered her hand with kisses. The next moment she was in my arms.

"I do love you, Horace Durand," she whispered, "and have ever!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHADOWS OF COMING REVELATIONS.

And, as she thus ministered to my bliss in this tender confession, the tears rained down her cheeks. She sobbed convulsively, as if some terrible weight of grief afflicted her, rather than the joy my vain imagination associated with the triumph of my hot, persistent, and impassionate wooing.

Fridoline's harp, which had made intermittent music in the outer sunshine, now stopped altogether, and I was glad to see the dame approach us, so hysterically was she weeping, this heroine of my Italian romance.

"Come, come, love, this will never do," said the Dame, "what is the matter?"

She did not answer.

"Judith, my dear, Judith," said the Dame, patting her hands, "Listen! I have news for you, news!"

There was something very earnest in the Dame's manner, and in her emphasising of the words "news for you."

She opened her eyes and looked up.

"A messenger from London."

She rose to her feet, leaning upon my shoulder.

"Only Simmons!" said the Dame.

My love trembled from head to foot.

"Where is he—the messenger?" she asked.

"In my room by this time; I will detain him till you ring."

"It is well," said my love, "it is well; I am not sorry."

The Dame looked anxiously at her lovely mistress, and then, kissing her on the forehead, left her.

"We will walk a little way through the grounds, Horace," said the dear lady of the villa, "and then we will say *au revoir*, and you will come again to-night."

She took my arm and we wandered into a grove of olives that were banked, as it were, by a forest of pines, through the red trunks of which came the warm sun.

"I think I have been wrong, Horace, to encourage you to declare your love so fervently, and to offer me marriage."

"No, no," I protested.

"It is infinitely sweet to me," she went on, "but there was a time when it would have been sweeter and very welcome!"

"And is it not welcome now?" I asked. "Do not mock me."

"It is welcome as the sun to the flower; welcome as the rain to the parched earth; but sometimes sun and rain come too late."

She spoke with a sad look in her eyes, and there was a deep pathetic music in her voice.

"You make my heart ache, when it should be leaping with joy," I said.

"It would be better for you to conquer this love, Horace; better for both of us. I ought to have resisted it, but, oh, it was so sweet, so true, so unselfish; and there are memories connected with it that make it all the more welcome."

"Memories!" I said, "What memories?"

"Some day you shall know; it is the only bitter in the sweet of this love of ours that you cannot guess them," she said, turning her tearful eyes upon me.

"I only know that I love you and shall ever," I said, "and I have no memories worth recalling beyond the moment when you first let me tell you so."

"Horace," she said, suddenly, "Fate may part us. Should it do so, will you try and think of me as you think now? Will you let the recollection of our love be as sweet as it is to-day, surrounded with the blessed halo of a pure devotion?"

"My darling!" was all I could say.

Her head lay for a moment upon my shoulder. She turned her face towards me. I kissed her.

"Good bye!" she murmured, "my dear Horace!"

"Good bye!" I exclaimed.

"For the present," she said; "I must leave you now to receive this importunate visitor from London."

"But I am to see you again this evening?"

"I hope so," she said, adding, "why should a momentary parting like this distress one so much, when there is an inevitable day that comes and parts us for ever? We are not the first who have breathed to each other their mutual loves and hopes and fears in this old palace; and Romeo and Juliet is an old, old story."

* * * *

While these never-to-be-forgotten moments flew by, Madame Fridoline had laid her harp aside to take part in the following

episode, the details of which I learned the same day at the inn.

An English gentleman has made his way into the entrance hall of the villa. He is a clean-shaven, well-built, but somewhat ascetic looking man of about fifty ; dark hair closely cropped, a strong though slightly pointed chin, thin lips, a bright bead-like eye, the *tout ensemble* being what would be called distinguished and manly, yet with a certain judicial coldness that is noticeable in not a few successful members of the Bar.

"Madame Fridoline will see you," says the major-domo of the house, "this way, thank you."

It is an ante-room adjoining the principal saloon into which the visitor is shown, and when the harpist and faithful servant of the lady of the villa joins him there occurs the following dialogue.

"It is a great surprise, how did you come here, my lord ?"

"Don't call me my lord," answered the

visitor, "my name is Mr. Simmons to you and to your mistress."

"But since you have been raised to the Bench?"

"Ah, you think that gives you a hold upon me; but it does not, my discreet janitor of the temple of Venus."

"It will serve you now better than the name of Simmons, to be what you are, my lord."

"Contumacious, eh? Well, no matter since I have unearthed you. Where is Judith?"

"Madame is out."

"Madame is at home," answers the visitor, with an air of authority.

"Madame is at home to no one," is the equally firm answer.

"Then consider me No One, good Fridoline, and announce me forthwith."

"That would be to forget your lordship's dignity and to discount my own veracity."

"If you were beautiful as you are clever, Fridoline, and young as you are old——"

"I should not condescend to bandy words with you," says the dame.

"Sharp as ever," says the visitor, "well well, we were talking of dignity and veracity; my dignity is of no moment, your veracity is; so tell the fair Judith that Somebody has called, and put your smiles into the message. Here is a souvenir from London to help you."

He gives her a Bank of England note. She looks at it.

"It cannot be said against you, Simmons, or judge, counsel or my lord, that you were ever ungenerous," she says.

"Simmons, Fridoline, Simmons, if you love me."

"You give me fifty pounds to announce you; I must do so whether you give me the money or not," she says pocketing the note.

"You thaw?"

"I do, I am a woman.'

"And know the value of money?"

"And peace; I hate to be worried."

"Sit down then and let us chat a moment. You are in hiding here?"

"In retreat."

"Grown tired of the gay world?"

"Madame has become religious."

"Indeed!"

"She has retired from the stage for ever."

"Nonsense."

"It is true."

"And I have just bought the lease of the Regent Theatre."

"Why?"

"To give it to Judith."

"No, truly?"

"Indeed I have."

"She will not take it."

"She shall."

"Madame has resolved, only this very day, never to return to London."

"We will see," says the visitor; "but tell me what brought you here?"

"Chance. We had travelled far and wide. This villa attracted Madame. A

priest who lives hereabouts, and knew her in England, recommended it to her, as quiet, out of the world, the very spot for her mood."

"And how do we spend our time outside this charmed circle of life?"

"We are good, very good."

"What a reformation!"

"We no longer believe in gaiety, we no longer intrigue; and we hate all plays, except a few passages of the classic and poetic drama."

"Delightful! How then do we get through the long weary days of virtue?"

"We say our prayers."

The visitor laughs.

"We go to mass, and take walks of contemplation."

The visitor laughs aloud. The Dame is encouraged to still further burlesque her kind and trustful mistress.

"We do a little tapestry; we read good books, and ——"

The Dame drops her voice, and looks

around as if in fear that she may be overheard.

"Yes," says the visitor, leaning towards her.

"And we are in love!"

The visitor shows his disappointment.

"Is that so new an incident that you make a mystery of it?" he asks.

"It is quite new. There is love *and* love I believe; this new love is true love."

"No, you astonish me."

"Do I? then I ought to feel proud."

"Do not pause to air your wit, dear Fridoline, tell me of this love ——"

"Poor dear kind soul, I pity her. She has fought against it as a prisoner might against his bars the first time the dungeon door closes upon him."

"You have never experienced the sensation, Dame Fridoline?"

"I have been what you fine gentlemen call a vagabond, in my time."

"A play-actor, Fridoline? they are vagabonds still according to law."

"And deserve to be, so long as they allow such as you to make the theatre an annexe to your vices."

Fridoline rises as she speaks, and confronts the visitor with an unaccustomed flash in her usually dull eye.

"A stirring sentiment, and well expressed, Fridoline; but they do allow it, they do allow it, old friend; and as life would be tolerable, somebody says, but for its pleasures, it would assuredly be unbearable but for its vices. But let us talk of this love you mentioned."

"I will not."

"Yes you will."

"No, I won't."

"Where do you invest your savings, Fridoline?"

"Where?"

"Yes, where? There is no stock so safe now or that pays so reliable a dividend as United States Bonds."

The Dame is silent, but she taps the floor with her foot.

"You once told me you had an ambition to save five thousand pounds?"

"I have a reason for it; I am no miser."

"I am rich; I will help you. Let us go back to Madame's new whim."

"It is not a whim; it is her first love."

"I thought you said it was new."

"Old and new, the revival of an old flame, and it burns with the brightness of truth and youth. If there be truth in the re-birth which the Church preaches, Judith Travers would be worthy of the love she has won; though I do not hold her unworthy of any man that breathes."

"Nor would she, Dame Fridoline, in a less conventional world than that we have had the misfortune to be born into."

"Heaven help poor women! It is a world in which their chances of happiness are few and their certainties of misery many."

"Justice herself has begun to acknowledge that, and the law is making provisions to increase the chances you speak of. And

who is the happy being who has touched the heart of Judith Travers in earnest, as you think ?"

"Ah, you can ask her that yourself. I have told you no more, I do believe, than she will tell you, nor half as much. But——"

"Yes ?"

"You said you would help me with that ambition of mine you were pleased to mention, Mr. Simmons."

"Ah, yes; here it is."

It is a small note this time that is placed in Dame Fridoline's wrinkled hand. She looks at it without seeming to notice that it is the smallest they issue from an English Bank. The tinkle of a distant bell is heard. She takes her revenge.

"There ! I have held you in conversation sufficiently long for the visit of the happy being, whom you mentioned, to come to a close; madame is now at liberty and will see you; the happy being has retired by the private path to the lake."

The visitor bites his lip and follows the

servant, who enters the room with orders to conduct his lordship to the presence of the lady of the villa.

* * *

Such was the account which Mr. Miller the Q.C., of my "Feast of St. Partridge" reminiscences gave me of his interview with Dame Fridoline. He was the "Simmons" and the "Judge" of the dialogue. I found him at the inn almost as soon as I returned; for I had walked leisurely from the villa wrapped up in my happiness.

"So," he said, "it is you, my dear young friend, I am glad to see you! Let us talk frankly with each other. I love your uncle; I respect you. If I had known as much of you as of Dick Grantley I should love you. But we will improve our friendship. You are in trouble. I must help you. Your disease is a violent one; it requires a violent remedy. I have just come from the Villa Verona."

With this brief introduction, Mr. Justice Miller (for he had recently been exalted to

the bench) exacting from me a promise that I would hear all he had to say, gave me the above graphic but heartless sketch of the first part of his visit to the villa. During the narrative I had to pace the apartment to keep down the expressions of my indignation; but considering my state of mind I bore with commendable patience his ruthless laceration of my feelings.

"And now," he said, "if you like I will give you an account of my interview with the lady herself."

"I do not wish to hear any more," I said.

"Better hear all; you have probably heard the worst."

"I am very wretched," I answered.

"Of course you are; but you will recover; you are taking your punishment with a calmness that promises a speedy cure. Shall I go on?"

"You are a cruel physician," I answered.

"My office just now is that of surgeon," he said.

"Your knife can never cut her image from my heart."

"Of course not; nor would I wish to indulge in such mutilation. But as your uncle's old friend"——

"It is your duty to torture the nephew," I said.

"If it is for the nephew's good, certainly," responded the judge.

"Continue! I am on the rack whether you tell me more or not. But beware how you overstep the borderland between friendship and enmity, between respect and contempt, between love and hatred; you think I am calm, patient, philosophical; don't count too much on my patience.

"I will only count upon your good sense and upon the love and duty and respect you owe to honest Dick Grantley, and to the unblemished name you inherited from Maximilian Durand," said the judge.

"You must leave me to my own interpretation of duty, and I do not need the stimulus of an exordium upon my father's

honour, nor is it necessary to remind me of the respect I owe to his memory."

"Well said; we are getting on," answered the judge, lighting a cigar and calling for a bottle of wine, adding as the waiter left the room, "I have only two hours at my disposal, we will therefore waste no more time."

"You leave Baveno to-day?"

"Two hours hence. It is almost accidental that I am here."

"I am sorry the accidental circumstance did not take you elsewhere."

"You are inhospitable; but as the old friend of your uncle——"

"I know, I know," I said interrupting him.

"Of course you do," he responded with a smile, "take a cigar."

I took a cigar. By the time his narrative was at an end I had almost eaten it.

CHAPTER V.

THE JUDGE COMPLETES HIS SKETCH OF JUDITH TRAVERS.

"Why did I come here, you ask? During my studies at the Bar I often engaged in amateur detective operations. I liked the work. Scotland Yard liked me. The disappearance of Judith Travers, the famous *comedienne* of the no less famous Regent Theatre, piqued my feelings as well as my skill at explorations. Nobody could find her. I suspect they had not tried. They were under orders. It was my business to discover her.

"You did not know that she is an actress? Of course not. You thought her a princess

in her own right. Well she is better than some princesses. She is one of the most generons women that lives. I have known her nearly seven years.

"Did I know her when first I met you at Warington Manor? Yes, she was the rage of London at that time. Is it possible that you have not heard of Judith Travers? Not seen her portrait in the shop windows? Oh, you have! But you did not know that this was the lovely Judith? Ah, well, it is a polite education to know her, and there is no harm in your going a little mad about her. But marriage is out of the question. There, there, don't interrupt the court. If London could have heard Judith's confession to me this morning, you would be the envy of every man in the metropolis; yes, and the envy of some of the women too; for Miss Travers is the most popular artist that ever trod the stage, in my time at all events.

"I always vowed that whenever I should be honoured by advancement to the distinction of becoming one of Her Majesty's

judges I would make Judith Travers a present of the lease of the Regent Theatre, marry, settle down, and be, in every way, worthy of the Bench. It may be my lot one day, like the judge in Whittier's poem, to look back from the matrimonial height, where I shall perch my hopes, to the ground, upon which some other poet says Happiness oftener builds her nest. But the performance of duty is the first essential of earthly bliss. You think I am talking with my tongue in my cheek? Not at all.

"It is not to be wondered at that you are over head and ears in love with Judith Travers. Why she should be over head and ears in love with you *is* surprising. I found her in what I will venture to call a statuesque frame of mind, cold as an icicle, except when she spoke of you. 'For the first time in my wretched life' she said, 'for the first time I love and am beloved. The dream may not last, will not, cannot, for he is sure to discover who I am, what I am.' The last three words were said with a pathetic force, which

she never reached in her highest flights of domestic comedy, not even in tragedy itself, though her Constance in King John was a fine example of acted feeling. 'I could have wished,' she said, 'that this one romance of my life might have lasted a little longer, it has been so sweet, and it seemed as if Heaven had sent it to give me a pure and true ideal of manhood, as a wholesome memory, in my retirement from the world.'

"I ventured to suggest that this was not very complimentary to an old friend like myself. She said it was not intended by way of compliment or reproof. 'Perhaps,' she continued, 'you are the least selfish of the men I know; the only real truth and honour and devotion and self-sacrificing affection I have known have been among my own sex. We are poor creatures, we women, but we have higher capacities of friendship and love than it is possible for man to imagine, much less to realise.'

"Was there no exception to this sweeping condemnation, I asked. 'None,' she

said, 'Not even Mr. Durand?' 'Not even Horace,' she replied. She spoke of you as if she had known you for years instead of only days, but what women and boys call love has a levelling tendency both as regards time and persons. You certainly might be proud of your conquest if the triumph were not so hampered with sentiment. She declined my offer of the lease of the Regent Theatre, but condescended to say she appreciated my well-intended kindness. A gift of twenty thousand pounds might have called for a warmer acknowledgment, for ten years of the Regent is worth that sum, though she made it worth it. I certainly looked for a more liberal return—for her return to town, at least, as the result of my magnanimity. But women are indeed incomprehensible. It is as well, perhaps; it will be for me less of a wrench of bachelor habits, easier to withdraw from artistic society, easier to fulfil that old vow of mine; and ten thousand a year as the endowment of Hymen is not unworthy the consideration of a judge who

has not saved half as much as he might have done during a long and lucrative practice. But I am becoming garrulous. My desire has been to spare you unnecessary pain at the discovery that you cannot fulfil the natural desire of that ardent and honourable passion which is the privilege and the trouble of youthful minds; that you cannot make Judith Travers Mrs. Horace Durand."

CHAPTER VI.

COLONEL ERNSTONE TO THE RESCUE.

I told my tormentor, his learned Lordship, my uncle's old friend, that at present I had only his evidence to guide my judgment.

"Consider its disinterestedness, its motive, my dear young friend," he answered.

"I do; but I shall still require another witness."

"And where shall you look for that other witness?"

"At the Villa Verona."

"You will call the lady herself?" he asked.

"She is my other witness," I said.

"I do not object," he answered, "and I hope some day you will forgive me for my intervention. At present you cannot. Nor will you be able to do so to-morrow, perhaps, nor next week, nor in a year's time; but you will."

"We shall see," I said, and on this we parted, the notoriously accomplished lawyer (who to the surprise of those who knew him best had received the vacant judgeship, but who, in the estimation of the general public, had been kept too long outside judicial honours) for a pleasant vacation trip; I, to count the beads of an early sorrow.

It was some kind of relief at the moment to hear of the return of Colonel Tom Ernstone. He had met the judge on the road, the one going, the other coming. Somehow he did not care for Miller. He said this as he settled down into his former corner of our common room, and gave orders to his man for dinner. No, he did not like Miller. The famous lawyer always appeared to be so confoundedly contented

with himself. Was never ruffled. Took life as calmly as if the world had been made on purpose for him. Always lucky, and led a notoriously fast life. Did not matter a bit. Went into the best society. Made as much money as he liked. Spent it on himself; had no relatives, no antecedents, did not care a curse for anything or anybody, except, perhaps, Dick Grantley, though he never visited him. He called shooting at Warington Manor visiting Dick, because the Squire always made a point of dining with the Dunstans the first week in September. Didn't care whether they made him a judge or not; made more money than judges made; but a fine thing to be an English judge, and he is as learned and scholarly as any of them they say. He will sentence a poor wretch to be hanged with as much unconcern as he will sum up a case of breach of promise. That is the kind of fellow to go through the campaign of life. No sensibilities, he cannot be wounded; no heart, he cannot be killed, except in the ordinary way; and he'll choke off fever, small-

pox, liver, and all the physical ills of the flesh, with his regular living, his dumb-bells, his horse exercise, his yachting, and his temperance. He was Tom Miller a few years ago—barrister and dramatist. Then he was more barrister than anything. One of the daily papers "took him up," as the saying is. He won the big Anglo-Indian Bamboo case "off his own bat," they said; and soon after that he hanged Billikins the poisoner, in spite of the most brilliant address for defence ever heard at the criminal Bar, and the evident leaning of the judge towards the prisoner. Then he got silk, and became Mr. Thomas Miller, Q.C., and a dilettante patron of the arts, more particularly of the theatre. Now, by Jupiter, he is my Lord Judge; and he is not surprised; wouldn't he if they made him Lord Chief Justice; dare say they will some day. If he had sentenced his first prisoner "to be taken to the place from whence you came, and there be hanged by your neck till you are dead," he could not have looked better satisfied than

when I met him an hour ago, and said "How do you do?" and "Good bye!"—"And I prefer saying good bye to such cold-blooded inventions of old Harry as Tom Miller any day."

I suppose Colonel Ernstone was encouraged to spin out this long review of the judge's career, because I did not interrupt him. Indeed, I rather encouraged him by monosyllabic "oh's," and "ah's," and "yeses," and "I should think so's." The Colonel was emptying his pockets, opening letters, and generally clearing up his quarters, lighting his pipe, and shaking himself clear of the cobwebs of travel, getting ready to enjoy a rest, and to forget that he had been away since the day we first encamped at the snuggest and most pleasant inn we had met with during our wanderings. When he found it difficult to say any more about Judge Miller, he turned to me in a protesting kind of fashion.

"Have you nothing to say?"

"Speed the parting guest, welcome the

new comer!" I said, "I think I hate Miller too."

"Oh, I don't hate him," said the Colonel, "but he nettles me; he is one of the men whose very presence rubs my moral consciousness the wrong way."

"I *do* hate him," I said.

"You! And why? He is one of your uncle's very oldest friends; but Dick does not like him for all that; they were in some scrape together in town, years ago, a fight in a gambling hell. Your uncle behaved very generously to Tom; it is an old scandal, there is nothing in it to be ashamed of, and it is not worth telling; but Dick Grantley twisted a knife out of the hand of an Italian Count, and probably saved Tom Miller's life. I must do Tom the justice to say that he has always shown his gratitude to Dick, and I know that he volunteered to use his influence in your interest when you go to London to read for the Bar."

"I shall not go to London to read for the Bar; and I shall refuse any assistance he may offer me."

"Nonsense! I am sorry I spoke about him; he can make your fortune at the law, and he is not a slave to the conventionalities of the profession; he is a man of the world, and it is as much his knowledge of life as his legal acumen that has scored for him in consultations, opinions, and also as an advocate."

"He has given me my first lesson, and it is evidently worthy of him. Whether he is moved by honest motives or whether he is playing an audacious game of bluff I am in doubt; and my doubt is mixed up with so much heart-break and depression of spirit that I am just now as miserable a person as your experience or imagination can conceive."

It needed but very small encouragement to induce me to tell the Colonel the entire story of my trouble from first to last. It was then that he sought to console me with that account of his own experiences, with which the reader is already acquainted. When he had finished, the dear, good-hearted

fellow, he seemed to think that, having capped my wretched situation, I ought to bear my trouble with a heaven-born resignation. It appeared to me that he found some kind of satisfaction in my misery.

"It brings us closer together, don't you know, and, though I am old enough to be your father, my heart is young enough to beat in sympathy with you. The fellows in London would tell you that I am a cold, cynical brute, not much better than Miller; but they don't know me; you do; let us shake hands over our misfortunes."

We shook hands.

"But will you not advise me?" I asked.

"I will," he said.

"What ought I to do?"

"I will tell you."

CHAPTER VII.

A DANIEL COME TO JUDGMENT.

"In the first place I do not believe the insinuations of Mr. Justice Miller."

"Thank you," I said eagerly.

"He is selfish and diplomatic."

"He is."

"I have heard of Judith Travers, and seen her act."

"She is an actress, then?"

"Yes; but that is no reason why she should not be a perfectly honest woman."

"Acting is one of the arts," I said.

"Truly, and there have been great and good women in the profession."

"And you think Miss Travers entitled to be ranked among them?"

"Yes, I do."

"I would stake my life on her truth and honour, and on the purity of her life," I said. "Miller has some selfish purpose to serve in what he has done and said. He may be my rival for her hand."

Encouraged by Ernstone, there was no imaginable interpretation I was not ready to put upon the new judge's conduct, that could tell in my favour and hers.

"Hardly that," said Ernstone, "but there is no woman who lives her life in the public eye that is not scandalised. An actress is always a mark for envy and slander."

"She did not tell me she acted," I said reflectively, "but if she had that would not have made her less beautiful in my eyes. Colonel Ernstone, if I do not marry that woman I shall never marry!"

"Don't make rash vows," responded the colonel, "we are the sport of circumstances. Here comes the dinner."

"I cannot eat."

"You must."

"You are hungry, I will walk while you dine."

"You will dine, otherwise I will offer you no more advice. Confound it, man, look at me! Strong in wind and limb, older than I look, in perfect health! I have cruised about the world with a greater sorrow than that which can possibly affect you. But I always made a point of dining for the sake of Thérèse, and dining as well as the country in which I happened to dine would let me. Come, come, you need all your wits in your present situation, and wits will not work without wittles, as those burlesque-writing fellows would say, though I have known troops do wonderful things on rice and coffee. During our advance on Cawnpore I think our fellows hardly stopped to eat at all, that is, with anything like a show of a comfortable halt, until we were close upon the brutes' entrenchments. I shall never forget General Havelock ordering a halt for two or three hours in the shelter

of a mango grove, where rations were served and properly cooked, a treat we had not known for a long time. Sufficient liquor was given the men to warm their rations, and pipes and cigars were smoked in something like comfort. After all it is a wise thing to feed well before entering upon an important undertaking."

I could not help seeing that the colonel was talking to beguile the time, or to divert my thoughts into a new channel. I listened to him with respectful attention, not unwilling to give my mind a rest that I might re-address myself to the chief object of them, perhaps from a new basis.

"General Havelock was a humane and a discreet commander. Nana Sahib had taken up a position at a village where the Grand Trunk Road may be said to unite with the principal road to the military cantonment of Cawnpore. He had blocked both roads by formidable entrenchments and his guns were well mounted all along his positions, which were a number of villages

skilfully fortified. The Oriental has a habit of expecting you to attack him where it is best for him that you should do so. He throws up his works and plants his guns and calculates that you will come at him there, where he is strongest. And so we should of course if no other course were open. Havelock was unequalled among Indian generals in the matter of selecting where and when to attack, so that his men should sustain a minimum of harm while doing a maximum of damage to the enemy. And, as I said before, he gave us leave to eat and rest and then moving us off, so that we could defile round the Nana's left, our guns were so placed that at the proper moment they were ready for either attack or defence. The movement did not escape the enemy's observation, and he tried to frustrate it; but we had dined, we had taken a nip of brandy in our coffee, we had smoked and pulled ourselves together, and within less than an hour we had taken Nana's works, captured his guns, and routed his devilish horde.

But here comes the dinner, and the moral of all this is, that, while great things have been done on empty tummies, much greater have been done after proper rest and refreshment. So fall to, Horace, my boy, and when we have discussed this *menu* from soup to thrushes, and from birds to coffee, we will fall in and take Miller's entrenchments, capture his guns, and rout him entirely."

"You think we can?" I asked, rising to the music of this cheery promise.

"Think! Why certainly! as that clever Yankee fellow says in the play," answered the colonel.

We dined; that is, I ate my dinner. Ernstone enjoyed his. He talked of all kinds of things, with snatches of military adventure in his reminiscences, and incidents of London life; and at last he told me the story of his daughter's engagement with Sir Christopher Hallam; told me all the details of it and his own story, just, so far as the facts were concerned, as he had told my uncle and as my uncle had already told me.

This enabled me to think. It was not necessary that I should listen to him. I reviewed my own history, tried to examine the immediate situation judicially as if I were discussing some other person's doubts and fears and passion; but it all ended in a dull vague stupid kind of way only, leaving me exactly where I was before I began to think about it. All the time I could hear Ernstonè droning out his long yarn; all the time I could see him blowing clouds of smoke out into the open air; all the time I could hear the distant music of the rivulet that wound round Villa Verona, just as I heard when I was a boy the humming of the mill-weir at Scarsdale.

"You have told Sir Christopher Hallam all about Thérèse?" I said presently, when it seemed necessary that I should say something.

"No, I have not had the courage; I believe I was one of the first among Nana Sahib's beastly blacks, but I am an awful coward sometimes. I have been all the way

to Milan chiefly for the purpose of telling Chris everything. I am back again without having said a word to him; and yet you have the folly to ask my advice in your own affairs. I dare say I am not bad at advising; I know exactly what I ought to do and I would make another fellow do it; but I am not really plucky myself and that is the truth."

"You have no doubt as to the result when you do tell him?" I said, for the first time getting away from my own affairs.

"Not in the least," said Ernstone, "though I hate to tell him; he is such a happy fellow; never known trouble of any kind. But we will talk no more of Hallam, nor of Thérèse, heaven bless her, nor of me; but of you and of Miss Judith Travers. Your uncle is bent on your marrying Helen Dunstan—an excellent match in every way. Kind as he is, to thwart him in this might make you enemies instead of friends."

"Impossible!" I said, "he is too good and too devoted to me and to my happiness."

"That very devotion makes obedience all the more a virtue on your part, not to say a duty. In case he has talked the match over with Dunstan, and I believe he has, your contumacy would be construed into something more than mere disobedience; it would be regarded as an insult to the girl herself."

"Oh, no, you are putting a very extreme case," I said.

"I am not, my friend; view the position from this stand-point, for the sake of argument. Would you brave it for this woman, upon whose reputation there may be a cloud?"

"Whatever and whoever she is, my feelings would not alter towards the ideal creature I believe her to be. I am so hard hit that I would take her now and ask no questions, take her on the blind faith expressed in the words of another song, sung by Miss Dunstan on the night when that other ballad touched your heart so keenly."

I know not, and I ask not.
If guilt be in thine heart;
I only know I love thee,
And love thee as thou art.

It was a woman who spoke the sentiment I know; I feel it as a man."

"But if all that Miller insinuates is true?"

"I might hate her, then as I hate him; hate her for showing me Paradise and condemning me to Hades."

"By which you mean you would not marry her?" said Ernstone, following my every word with critical sympathy.

"I don't know what I mean," I answered.

"Then listen to me! Keep your appointment. Be frank with her. Tell her all. Show her the position you are in. Ask her advice. If she should then encourage you to cast in your lot with hers, she being resolved to leave the stage; and if you feel what I felt when a true and honest love took hold of me; then, by Jupiter, give reins to the impulse of your nature and marry her! A woman who can interpret nobility of soul in

a mimic scene as she can is not the creature Miller would have us believe. If I am any judge of character, Judith Travers will not belie her truthful eyes. She will prove worthy of your love and friendship."

"My dear friend!" I exclaimed, seizing the Colonel's hand, "you only do her common justice. Your generous advice finds an echo in my heart, which tells me it is good. I will go to the Villa now. Wish me good fortune!"

"I do so with all my heart!" said the Colonel.

* * * * *

The sun had dropped behind the pines and left the olives dark and sombre, when I reached the gardens of the Villa Verona. The fountain was making plaintive music among the roses by the dial. I listened for Fridoline's harp. A great stillness prevailed. The silence struck me with an indefinable fear. I rang the bell at the portal of the Villa. I don't know why it sounded to me like a knell. No footstep responded to it. I rang

again and again. No reply. As I stood in doubt Father Gabriello appeared in the garden, coming upon the scene from the point where I had entered.

"Madame has gone away," he said.

"Gone away!" I said, re-echoing his words.

"She will not return any more to the Villa Verona," continued the priest.

"Not any more," I said, still echoing him, "what do you mean?"

"Only what I say; only what she requested me to say; possibly she has given you more explicit information in this letter."

I opened the note which he handed to me. The light had almost faded out of the sky. I read, with some difficulty, as follows:—

"My departure will make you sad, as it "makes me. But it is best. I was wrong "to receive you at the Villa. Wrong for "many reasons. Some day you may know "what they are. Then you will pity me. "Why did I encourage you to stake your "happiness on an impossible dream? I can "hear you ask the question. I can feel its

" rebuke. There is no justification in my
" answer. It was so sweet to realise the
" holiness of a pure love. I had not strength
" to resist the temptation of living, if only
" for a time, in such an atmosphere. O
" forgive me, forgive me. The only bitterness
" in the dream was the knowledge that you
" had forgotten me. To-day, on my journey
" to more restful scenes, what was a bitterness
" is so no longer; for it teaches me that Time
" carries healing in his wings for bruised
" hearts. I beseech the blessed Virgin, that
" she will teach you to forget me now as you
" forget her who always remembered you;
" and in whose voice and touch she recalled
" the day when a boy and girl kissed and
" parted years ago by the Scarsdale meadows.
" Forgive me for this new pang I cause you.
" Think of me with the perfume of new-mown
" hay, and let your memory of me be asso-
" ciated with convent bells and sunny skies
" away from cruel cities. Good bye—forgive
" me—forget me!

" CONSTANCE GARDNER."

END OF VOL. I.

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